

# Chitral, Khyber & Kurram 2013 - 2014

## Chapter I

I am sitting at Infusion Cell in Balahisar Fort, it is popularly known as Confusion Cell, outside it is pleasant, and being Friday the scouts are preparing for Friday prayers. Next to me the scout is watching the last night recordings of jet aircraft poundings of miscreants hideouts in Tirah Valley not very far from here. The whole area is not visible to operators through the Google Earth thus an aerial reconnaissance of such areas is carried out using C-130 aircraft of air force or King Jet of army aviation. These videos are then scrutinised here and targets selected for air force or artillery. Sounds impressive and it is but it is being done in a relaxed manner with a pair of parrots also sharing the cell apart from four wall mounted screens which are now being used for cable watching.

This cell was incorporated with the help of Americans who brought all this equipment , a huge coloured printer for printing maps, screens to monitor the live video of drone or other aerial information or mission, in short a kind of their own operational room. Now they have gone and work has slowed down but now it has been tuned to own requirement and technical capability.

I came here almost two weeks ago.

21<sup>st</sup> May 2013. FC Mess Peshawar, 2300 hours.

Electricity has just arrived, it will likely to stay for another two hours before it runs away for an hour and then comes back, this drama will last whole night and it is going on for last five years. It is hot and terrible; not surprisingly the ruling political parties have been washed away in this general elections for this sole reason. One has to think about the millions living in the inner and old city with having no means to buy the generator or any other source to keep the lights working and running the affairs of daily life.

This is my third night here in the mess, I am here to write the history of the Frontier Corps, I came driving in my Mercedes from Islamabad, after spending hours with Jehangir mechanic, all the way my eyes were on the temperature gauge and I did not had a sigh of relief even once. My ordeal can be understood only by those who have old cars and especially those which if break down on highway can neither be pushed and nor be rectified.

All along it was darkness, town and villages giving bleak look although the euphoria of having the first free and fair election in which the Patahns have elected a new political party Tehreek Insaaf of Imran Khan into power in the province with Nawaz Shariff in power at centre, [electricity has gone again after just fifteen minutes] just imagine the state of mind of ordinary person in such situation. It is inhumane, barbaric and unjustifiable in this heat with modern construction forestalling any movement of air conditioner.

The very first night which was two nights ago in this mess , I had to open the windows which I believe were closed since years as is obvious from the dust, my room is called Tochi , it si the last room on the top floor with windows on both ends, one lacks fly and other was jammed. One can bear the weather provided if one lives accordingly but unfortunately our lifestyle is all too banking upon the air

**Bala Hisar Fort**

I am sitting inside it right now rather I am at its top. I came here first time in 1993 with my wife, son who was just few months old and mother in law; not much has changed inside the fort or outside, it is the beauty of the city that it gives such an impression on the other hand quite a work has been done inside the fort with a new mosque and new lines for scouts both made artistically in classical red brick style; it was done by last inspector general of Frontier Corps Major General Nadir Zeb.

My job is to compile the history of Frontier Corps, while going through the history compilation of Tochi Scouts I read quite a lot and as such I can claim to have a fair amount of knowledge about the area and the corps. I know that in 1951 the efforts were made to have the history of the corps, again in sixties, seventies and then in nineties same efforts were floated which finally resulted in the publishing of book *Frontier Guardian* by Major Muhammad Nawaz. However when I inquired nothing was traceable regarding those efforts or data. On the other hand, the 11 Corps started or initiated a plan to archive the history and similarly army under General Kayani also took keen interest in the archiving and establishing a museum, it is these external factors which resulted in FC having a very sound and good draft of present conflict. Efforts of Colonel Mamun, Lieutenant Colonel Azhar of education corps are worth mentioning in the compilation of the draft. The input all came from the corps and now I intend putting all of it in a chronological fashion.

There is a museum also here, a unique one in terms of design and quite rich in terms of the artifacts all dealing with FC. A small very small library is also existing next to the museum; other than this it is all bleak.

The weather in these two weeks remained hot very hot but then all of a sudden it rained last week and now it is bearable although the famous dust layer is still hanging around the Peshawar Bowl. Peshawar is a rather strange kind of vale, it is bounded on all sides by medium level mountains but the bowl itself is very wide and very fertile, the circumference must be in tens of miles. As I see it now towards the northern direction all I can see from this height is a sea of green with attitude almost level, a dust wall obstructs my view but when it is clear as it was yesterday then the mountains can be observed which are approximately thirty –forty miles away. Through these mountains exist passes or more precisely the river flows like River Kabul which runs in a west-east direction and joins with river Swat almost ten –fifteen miles north east of Peshawar at Charsadda. The famous Khyber Pass is on the west of city, the pass leading towards the Chitral onwards to the Wakhan is in northern direction and can be detoured via Mardan in the eastern direction also.

This is the natural lake of human habitat, the water pours down from the high mountains of central Asia which looks surprising and deceptively close from Bala Hisar and this the magic of Peshawar that one tends to shrink the distance towards north. The crow distance is not much in any case, Chitral is 45 minutes away on a propeller driven aircraft, Kabul is also at same distance. Kashmir also looks closer; the hard fact is that once you cross River Indus then you are in a different frame of mind.

### **Balahisar Fort Days**

Most mysterious past like many Pathan, there is very little written record about it not even in provincial archives. The most solid evidence is a black and white picture of probably first Afghan war, surprisingly rare painting is also missing at least in the Frontier Corps at present. The picture shows a mud bricked fort of almost a replica of present, which is brick lined by the British when they took over the Balahisar in 1845. Apparently it was made in present form between 1850-1865; for the reason that

no such account is mentioned in Colonel Warburton's account of almost a quarter of century lasting till the end of century.

Peshawar and Balahisar are both interwoven with each other in the quilt of history and both have to be analyzed as such. Peshawar deviates against the universal wisdom of having city being evolved on the bank of river ; Lahore & Multan are classic examples , all three have forts and an ancient past. Peshawar thus was never a planned city and nor a trade route; Charsadda which lies almost ten miles north of Peshawar on the banks of River Kabul and river Swat is the more logical old hub of movements between the Indus Valley and higher mountainous civilization.

Balahisar Fort thus emerged as the southern out post of the Charsadda guarding the Khyber Pass, Tirah {present day Khyber Agency}; their were further satellite outpost forts as well. The big question is why Balahisar is mud bricked in 1840 picture; almost all the forts were bricked lined, look at Attock Fort built by Akbar the Great in 1630 on the banks of river Indus, Rohtas Fort by Sher Shah Suri in 1540 thus the mystery deepens as to why this important fort was not fortified or why Peshawar was not given the importance to have fortification.

Peshawar's rise to present fame starts with the Afghan Wars before that it was just a caravan serai marching towards or down from the mountains through Khyber Pass or more precisely the Afridi Tribe along with Shinwari, Shalmanzi and Mullagori. Mohmand tribe's tarakzai branch owns 14000 acres in four villages around Peshawar. British experience from 1850 onwards at Peshawar was not pleasant mainly due to poor hygienic conditions of the city which chiefly was due to lack of water source. Municipal committees and Deputy Commissioners dug well in the city for drinking water just like we have water purification plants today at different parts of city. Cholera and other epidemics including malaria were common. Theft and robbery were the favourite past time of the vagabond tribesmen. Religious sentiments were high but always within limit only four attempted murders on British officers in twenty years till 1899.

Michni and Nawagai passes are the historical passes through which the Alexander the Great's army marched down. It should be kept in mind that there were two flanks, one led by Alexander himself which marched down towards Peshawar in a wide northern move through Nawagai pass, the other two Greek generals then led the other prong through the Michni and Khyber Passes.; all marched and followed with water source {River Kabul & Swat} less the Khyber Pass formation which debouches on to the Peshawar. It should be kept in mind that nothing of Alexander's history has survived in its original version and the best considered among academic world is that of Arrian's but it was written after almost 300 years in 70 AD , therefore nothing is authentic other than the dictates of geography.

One of the oldest Buddhist ruins are located here including the Ashoka's pillars in the close vicinity of Peshawar but even in more close proximity of Charsadda, the Takht Bhai ruins. Similarly one such stupa is also on the top of a hillock overlooking the Khyber Pass road connecting Peshawar with Kabul.

Fort is in three layers each higher than the other till gets an elevation of 200 feet , the elevation of Peshawar itself is 1800 feet thus a good observatory is created, one feels secure inside and it is peaceful too a bit isolated. I am now having a fort mentality. My scanning has been constantly towards the north-western quarters because I sit in Infusion Cell which has a glass window panel overlooking the western direction. Sitting on revolving chair one gets the feeling of being on a ship deck . The horizon is all dusty with visibility uptill twenty miles . By evening it further improves and silhouettes of Khyber becomes obvious. On the south of Peshawar are the Afridis of Dara Adam Khel who in a

crescent encircles the Peshawar till the centre of Balahisar Fort entrance gate, from there onwards the Mohmand's area starts. Shinwaris and Mulagori are another two tribes who lives on the northern edge of Afridis , they thus control the mouth of River Kabul, the left bank is with Mohmand Tribe.

At the gate there is one sentry wearing white helmet who opens the gate but I in the first day had gone through the whole procedure , even now when I go there by rickshaw I had to follow the procedure. It is okay nothing extraordinary about it , but I am sure they can alert others. The outer wall of the fort especially the front face has been given a face lift by Nadir Zeb Major General. The present entrance is ascending and winding with three turns or ghulam Gardesh'. In reality the fort had an old entrance similar to Lahore Fort's entrance but on less grandeur, it is visible today and stands out along the whole front wall; this seems to be the royal entrance and the present entrance is at slightly lower level and used for the troops movement; fort had gates at each layer which was closed down at the night, this procedure is not in vogue as only one main gate is closed . Other day while coming out of the canteen which is located at the top plateau as well, I noticed a sliding pathway with a gate at the end, the length is not more than hundred feet. Thus other exist from the fort. At present the toilets are constructed on the second layer which are used by the troops. This gate is being used for that purpose. I went down and observe the layer, it is wide enough to have accommodation as well. On the eastern side is the grave or ziaart of a holy man ; it was a graveyard in the past. The civil population or the fort attendant had their accommodation on the second layer. This included soldiers, followers and officials. It provides ample space all along the citadel. The first layer similarly must have been the residential area of followers camp, stables and so on.

### **Living inside the Balahisar**

On my very first day I requested Colonel Mamoon to allot me a living room inside the fort as I wanted to savour the lifestyle of the fort, there are two rooms one is under use of fort security officer and other is a small duty officer bunk thus I have to live inside the mess.

The top plateau is wide enough to hold a divisional headquarters and in old time should have been the royal residence. There is hardly any building of ole time left untouched, all have false ceilings, glass windows, the toilets are hardly attached with offices at least in old pattern construction. I had a round of the area, first I had to find the tailor to get my clothes stitched and from there I went in search of cobbler and this took me to the remote , neglected and hidden part of the area. Tailor is in the barrack where as the cobbler has a tin roof hut. The field mess kitchen is impressive. And so are the waiters. There are very few visitors during the office time although there is a regular flow of visitors for IGFC. I have met him twice in last two weeks and I am very at ease with him. He likes to talk and listen as well, young and courteous. He have no idea the kind of mental torture I had with the mess and military transport branches. His office is spacious, they have created a kind of garden by having plants outside the main glass wall and then putting a tarpal over it. The staff officer and a a visitor waiting room the old jirga room are part of the office block. Another office block which is a new construction houses full colonels and deputy, all have glass windows and attached toilets.

Jirga room and adjoining infusion cell are new construction, jirga hall is impressive but washrooms stinks, the main mosque and living lines are the centre of attraction, both stylish and elegant in design, mosque now occupies the centre of the courtyard witch is at a lower level along with the vehicles parking area/

There is a one dish lunch everyday which I am not sure whether it is on the house or on officers, in fact FC is so big hearted in this manner and that one often thinks of it in such pattern. Modern mind

may call it wastage of resources or accountability or Tax payers money and so on but let it not be forgotten that everything is not related with tax money only , FC captures huge quantity of drugs and other smuggled items which enhances the national exchequer as well. The point to bring home is that when you live in old building like Balahisar Fort than your life pattern and working habits are influenced by historical values.

Peshawar is a scary city more so when you read enough to understand that everyone is not that classic pathan who will protect your life at the peril of his own. We think that as long as one is protecting your life he is good , it is not like here in Peshawar. It is primitive in nature to say, dusty and dirty. I spent three days in Saddar , one day searching for a bag and next for a digital camera.

I came to Peshawar first in 1979 with a school debating team which included myself, Habib Ansari and Ahmed Hayat the present GOC of 40 Division. We had a walk in the Saddar , ate flying saucers which were sandwich in nature and generally admire the city which looked so different from Karachi from we have come. Pen pistols were the favorite item for youngsters and I was no exception. I had heard about Peshawar in 1972 rather it will not be out of context if I say that from my childhood in Punjab I was warned about these patahans , they kidnap children was the biggest fera inculcated in our minds. Later on in Karachi I came to know that the family which lives on the ground floor, one widow, her son , daughter and many others, her husband was killed by a hired killer who after killing just walk away to Ilaqa Ghair; my biggest fantasy at that time was to see this ilaqa ghair and what all I can manage there where there is no law.

In 1981 I came here twice once I stayed with my parents friend at Ghazi near Tarbela who took us all along the frontier including Peshawar and Swat, next I came with my uncle and family and again we went to Swat. I had an unusual experience then, I was a teen ager ad I walked towards a spot where pathan families were having picnic and I was warned by a member of that family wearing weapon to buzz off and I did. My aunt was posted here, her husband was a colonel in then martial law and they were residing in the MPA hostel. I then ventured into ilaqa ghair on a motorcycle. I had a miraculous survival after I crashed my bike on the road due to over speeding.

In military academy the cadets comes here, I also did but my real stay was here in 1992 when I was posted here in the flying squadron , was newly married and hooked onto hashish. I saw the city at night , at dawn at all times, I flew over it un countless times, read about it, attended local parties also, had a date with a pathan girl also yet I had no pathan friend in real sense other than Javed who had a weapon and Hashish shop in ilaqa ghair which is next to the Hayatabad. The old Bara or ilaqa ghair was towards the south west of the city and it was half a n hour drive with dusty and pucca shops filled with foreign clothes, cigarettes, cosmetics, electronics were functional. At that time and it lasted well into mid nineties that people from Punjab come here for shopping. The new karkhano market as it is known today was almost non existent in early eighties. After commissioning in 1984 in an air defence regiment at Sargodha, one of our regiment 95 was here at Peshawar which included Captain Rizwan, captain Javed to name, other regiment 13 Light was at Risalpur thus a ready flow of travelling. My own unit officer and my very close friend Captain Samee Khan was living in Peshawar thus I became close to it.

There used to be regular bus service between Sargodha and Peshawar via Khushab area. Bus used to leave Peshawar at mid night and reaches Sargodha early in morning, once myself and Samee Khan along with Rizwan travelled on it. Through Samee Khan I came to know that there is prostitution in the city also. Tassadaq had plenty of such stories to narrate, I saw with my own eyes an officer hooking a girl and then having regular dates. Thus that image of piety was shaken. When I was posted

here from Karachi I had long walks on beach with my friends and I highlighted what I am expecting here; I was mentally shaken how to start a married life in Peshawar. My wife who happens to be a air force family spent almost all her life here in Peshawar and Kohat without learning any Pashtu word was working in military hospital as doctor.

I remained here for two years and it was fantastic in all sense. My son was born here and spent couple on months before we were posted to Multan. I was impressed with Peshawar in many ways , first there was never any fight among males, I saw university boys wearing sherwani and vacating seats for elders, girls beautiful and many tales were narrated about them by the bachelor officers of the squadron. One of the squadron officer was having a rough time with a local girl and in the end the officer was given letter of thanks by the army. I have walked through the city at all odd times, I have watched porn and smoke hashish in the Bilours cinema, Peshawar in short was hub of all evil vices, drugs, weapons, porn, smuggling , fake currency, stolen cars and so on; but there was no fear in the air . There was always a difficulty in finding a transport at odd hours, at night it seems as if the city just shuts up. There used to be regular traffic of foreigners at least till 1979, I saw them wandering on the city streets with pathan shop keepers high on hashish just staring at the white girls although clad in decent hippie wardrobe.

## **Mahsud Scouts. Chapter II. May 2013**

My first stop was at Mahsud Scouts or the Khyber Agency. Irony is that none is familiar with Mahsud scouts, i have been hearing there name quite often from my friend Brigadier Sardar who was pushing me to write the history of them but i was reluctant as in my opinion the corps is not old enough in reality i had very feeble knowledge about them. Living in Balahisar one gets into a routine and i came out of the inertia by opting to visit the closet corps Mahsud scouts. On Friday the vehicle came there was one officer major Imran who happened to be from Air defence keeping long hair, we went together in the convoy comprising of two vehicles.

**Karkhano Market** at the edge of settled areas of Frontier capital Peshawar is a classic display and proof of how the tribes have been pacified. The area west of Peshawar after twenty miles is the area of Afridi tribe, this territory then extends for another thirty odd miles further west and encompasses Durand Line and more importantly the Khyber Pass that allows trans mountain ranges movement or between the Afghanistan and Pakistan. Area west of Peshawar is like a bowl with edge of bowl starting at twenty miles with mountain tentacles. Besai Ridge divides this western extremity into two halves, the area on the north of this half leads to the Khyber Pass through Jamrud however the other half of Besai ridge is known as Bara Valley and is the most commercial in the whole Durand Line or tribal area. In Bara valley lives the six clans out of eight clans of Afridi and even among them the Shalobar, Malik Din Khel are on the edge and as such have more control of the commerce, Kuki Khel controls the Khyber Pass at Landi Kotal .

This disparity of having trade opportunities among the clans can have variable outcomes, the less blessed tribes can resort to theft and robbery or they can be coaxed into joining the government

jobs or they can be given lands to open their own markets and this is the way the tribal belt has been interfaced into the settled areas since 1849 when Punjab was annexed and Peshawar already under the Sikh rule and governed by a French Governor attained the position of being the Frontier Town between the British India and Kingdom of Afghanistan. Peshawar then was a city of thieves and diseases apart from gardens. It had acute shortage of water for drinking other than the administration of Sikhs was well established with forward fort at Jamrud the eastern mouth of Khyber Pass, Hari Singh Nalwa had advanced ten miles further west at Ali Masjid the midpoint of the pass but was defeated and killed in field.

It took us not more than twenty minutes from Peshawar to reach the Fort Salop. The track sneaks out from the rear gate of the frontier corps establishment area at Hayatabad crosses a road and follows a track. There is now a wall surrounding the whole Hayatabad complex extending almost towards the Bara Bazar, it is like Berlin Wall in a sense as there exist two distinct cultures on both side of wall. The western end of the area beyond the wall is the Khyber Agency which has its Bara Tehsil here. On a broad spectrum the main road leading from Peshawar – Torkham-Kabul originates from this point, area on the south of the road is the Bara Tehsil which extends further south. Presently it is the hot bed of miscreant activities and my destination is this valley.

We passed in front of Shakas fort which is a new construction as it dates back to mid eighties and practically road terminates here, ahead is a narrow pass and then road takes a dip and first habitation is contacted which is rather well built, solid house, thick growth of jungle trees none bearing fruit or grand in height but gives over all a green colour to the eyes. Town is like any normal town in Frontier, none was carrying weapons, children going or coming from school wearing white uniform which is a rare scene as all wear militia colour in school but it is probably a private school. We drove farther and these last few miles before the Fort Salop are the dangerous areas, many blast have taken place here so are ambushes. The track is narrow, dusty and sharp turns, it is rather flat and slightly elevated from the ground, visibility is reduced due to thick growth of bushes. The mental state in such moments is alarming, one expects a blast at any moment, a firing burst coming and hitting the vehicle has all the probability, nothing can be taken for granted. My heart beat accelerates, eyes searching for anything unusual, however i had no weapon with me and therefore all these were just basic instincts. The fort all of a sudden emerges out of nowhere; few shops outside which at some time not long ago were bustling with life now deserted. The sentry opened the gate and we entered inside. There is a sigh of relief which every one takes when ever they reach back into the safety and comfort of the fort

**Mahsud Scouts** look after the south western approach towards Peshawar, it is part of Khyber Agency and its headquarters is at Fort Salop approximately twenty miles south west of Peshawar. MS {Mahsud Scouts} were raised on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1937 at Razmak as a 5th Mahsud Road Construction Battalion. These battalion were raised in mid thirties in Waziristan mainly to induct the native tribes into military there by creating goodwill by providing jobs. On the other hand certain tribes were not fully trusted to the extent to raise full fledged battalions; Mahsud Battalion was a road construction unit mainly and chiefly task for road construction.

### **Khajauri Campaign 1930 .**

Fort Salop It is the home of Mahsud Scouts, they occupied it in 1961 but the fort has a history of its own. It was constructed in 1930 as a result of Khajauri Operations. The plains of Baar Valley are also known as Khajauri Plains, Khajauri means Date palm.

On 23rd April 1930, the British army opened fire on the Red Shirts in Qisa Khwani Bazar, Peshawar. Somehow, a rumour spread that three Afridis were also killed who had gone to Peshawar for receipt of their allowances. Frontier conflicts in majority of the cases are result of rumours and this was no exception.

A meeting of Afridi took place in Bagh Masjid Tirah, on 2nd May 1930 and it was decided to send a lashkar to attack Peshawar. Two to seven thousand armed Afridis got collected in Khajuri Plain. They collected at Spin Kamar, Malakdin Khel and Kambar Khel were the chief movers. They started going towards Peshawar by 30 May in small parties along Bara River. On 5th June 1930, they contacted British forces on the Western outskirts of Peshawar cantonment, Fighting took place for four days and the lashkar was dispersed. Another Lashkar assembled on 05 August and attacked on 13th August 1930 and fighting with British forces continued for about six days resulting in loss of life and property. The British used artillery to disperse the tribesmen. By 20th August about 250 Afridis including 2 old women even reached Peshawar city. The Supply Depot in Cantonment was also attacked. Sir Edwin Pears, chief commissioner of Peshawar, recommended to the Government of the India that Tirah should be occupied<sup>1</sup>.

The Afridis are a famous, large and powerful tribe, they live in the area called Tirah, which is about 900 square miles of hilly country, to their west is the Province of Ningrahar, and to their south lies Kurram Agency. The Afridis are divided into eight major clans: Adam Khel, Aka Khel, Kamar Khel, Kambar Khel, Kuki Khel, Malikdin Khel, Sipah and Zakha Khel. The major portion of the Afridi tribe lives on east of Durand Line, with the exception of a small portion of the Zakha Khels, who have their villages in Ningrahar Province across the mountain, through which the Durand Line is marked.

The Government of India formed a committee on 20th September 1930. In January 1931, the committee decided that occupation of Tirah would be unsound politically. As such, occupation of the Khajuri Plain only, was recommended, On 9th December 1931, final sanction was given. General Coleridge started the occupation operation immediately which lasted till 31st March 1931. Consequently roads were constructed on the Khajuri Plain. Some permanent military posts were also established at Fort Salop and other places. On 3rd October 1931, an agreement between the British and Afridis was signed at Jamrud and the British army action came to an end. Fort Salop was named after the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, the British unit which consolidated the area of Karawal etc. During the operation three Brigade size camps were established at Bara Fort, Karawal and Miri Khel. Commander-in-Chief India, Field Marshal Lord Birdwood, also visited troops at Bara Fort, A medal of North West Frontier Campaign 1930-31 was issued after the occupation of Khajuri plain.

The occupation of Khajuri initiated by British took a permanent shape and continued till to date

## History

Mahsud Scouts have a convoluted history; it was raised as 5<sup>th</sup> Mahsud Road Construction Battalion on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1937 at Razmak as part of Waziristan Command. It was an army unit having army table of organization and equipment. British had raised four such battalions in the Waziristan from 1935 onwards. These battalions had one thing unique; they were not armed with any weapon rather these were road construction battalions wholly consisted of Mahsud Tribe and commanded by a British

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<sup>1</sup> Nawaz Major, Frontier Guardian, Frontier Corps publication, 1994.



officer, 5<sup>th</sup> Mahsud battalion was raised and commanded by **Major R.S.Jhonson** for a year before the battalion itself underwent transition; it was put under Frontier Corps control from Army in April 1938.

The very first task undertaken by the battalion was the construction of Razmak cantonment extension and hutted accommodation. With this change of command another important feature was a change in name, now it was simply known as the Mahsud Battalion still only armed with shovel and pick. One of the key lesson of Frontier warfare has been to keep an eye on the composition of native tribes in militia; no single tribe to have predominate majority and secondly to maintain a balance between the cis frontier and cross frontier tribes within a militia in Frontier Corps. Mahsud battalion was an exception as it still remained wholly composed of Mahsud. Mahsud battalion after Razmak took part in the construction of Nowshehra Ammunition Depot in 1940-41 and then took part in the construction of anti tank defence at Thall in 1941-42 which can be seen even today. Oghi –Durband road construction was another major project undertaken by the battalion. It was seldom employed in unity rather field construction companies were spread out within the frontier carrying out construction of roads and buildings especially the camps.

Another battalion 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Battalion was also raised in 1944 during the dying days of Second World War It was raised at Sararogha in June 1944 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel R.E.F.G North thus the old 5<sup>th</sup> battalion which had become only Mahsud battalion was now known as First mahsud Battalion . It was the good experience of the First mahsud which had in fact laid the foundation of the second battalion. Both shared similar cultural traits and were known as Mizh thus the Mahsud Battalions were known as ' Mizh Mahsud ' It is a Pakhtu word meaning 'we'. Mizh has become an expletive with the Mahsud who would always say 'Mizh mahsud, i.e. 'we Mahsud' it conveys unity and cohesion which is an outstanding characteristic of the Mahsud. There are main tribes of Mahsud – Alizai, Shaman Khel and Bahlolzai; collectively all three are known as 'Dre Mahsud' [three Mahsud]. One platoon of Urmars was also part of Mizh Mahsud; Urmars are non Mahsud but are affiliated to Shaman Khel.<sup>2</sup> The main tasks were construction of roads, airfields, ammunition depot and other similar works of construction and maintenance.

On independence the battalion was busy in the construction of Balakot road. The heroic deeds of the battalion during the first Kashmir War of 1947-1948 are one of the golden chapters of its history. It was unarmed yet when the opportunity arises of helping the brother Muslims in the Kashmir the Mahsud rushed forward. The battalion was not officially employed in the war rather the scouts were encouraged to take part in the liberation of Kashmir voluntarily. From November 1947 onwards when Gilgit Scouts had carried out the war of liberation in Gilgit and Baltistan which resulted in the war being stretched to the limit in the extreme north , it was then that the battalion was given the task of constructing and improving the existing track leading to Gilgit; Babusar Pass .

Major Mir Badshah Mahsud and Subedar Major Muhammad Akbar Mahsud wrote the very first chapter of Mahsud's bravery under Frontier Corps. Major Badshah was decorated with Fakhr-i-Kashmir, hilal-1- Kashmir and Imtiaz Sanad for his excellent command of Mahsud. Subedar Major Muhammad Akbar was decorated with Sitara-i- Jurat; he is the very first Mahsud to be decorated with such decoration. Words about Major Mir Badshah, there were two officers with same name and both commanded 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud battalions. One Major Bad Shah MBE is from Baluch regiment who commanded 2<sup>nd</sup> mahsud from 14<sup>th</sup> October 1952 – 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1953 and again from August 1953 –

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<sup>2</sup> The Frontier Corps an Introduction, Code No FCP-1, a Frontier Corps publication, 1967. P-166.

November 1953, the other Major Badshah is from General List and commanded 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud from 1951-1959<sup>3</sup>.

Both the Mizh Mahsud were employed in Titwal Sector, 2<sup>nd</sup> mahsud Battalion was decorated with Tamgha –i- Difa. After the cease fire these battalions were back to construction of road so vital for the maintenance of troops in forward areas. Mr Liaqat Ali Khan during his visit to the Dir in November 1949 has the distinction of visiting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Battalion; he was presented with Rupees 500 by the battalion as a contribution in Quaid-e- Azam memorial fund. Twelve mile long road that connects Garhi Habibullah to Balakot was completed in 1955; it took three years of hard work by the Mizh Mahsud. Another remarkable feather in the cap is the construction of 17 miles long and arduous road connecting Lowari Top with Mirkani Post took five years and was commissioned in 1960. Lowari Top road was initially constructed by the 1<sup>st</sup> mahsud Battalion in 1949 it connects Dir with Chitral. Malakand hydro-electric project was initiated in 1950 and was completed by end 1952 by the 1<sup>st</sup> mahsud Battalion, similarly Kaghan Valley road was initiated in 1953 later the project was abandoned.

12<sup>th</sup> September 1960 is a historic day for the Mahsud battalions, on this very day these Mahsud were combatised, mortars and machine guns took the place of pick and shovels. It was the Dir –Bajaur campaign of 1960-1961 which was instrumental in this transition. Mizh Mahsud took active part in the operations. From Dir the 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud moved to Kalat on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1964, a successful Brampta was carried out by the 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1964 in Dansar area which is part of Jhalwan. One Tamgha-i- Basalt and one Imtiaz Sanad was sarkar's award to the 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud.

**1965 War** once again saw Mizh Mahsud on the eastern border, it was only 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Scouts which was employed on the border and were awarded with one Tamgha-i-Basalt { PA 4821 Capatin Sikander Khan } and one President's Commendation Certificate.<sup>4</sup> It was on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1965 when the Mahsud Battlions were formally converted into Mahsud scouts thus 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud Battalion became 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud Scouts and so forth.

Fort Salop was the permanent station of 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Scouts whereas after the Kalat operations the 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud was stationed at Shelabagh which is 60 miles from Quetta and 17 miles short of Chaman. The main tribes around the area are Kakars, Achakzais, Ghilzais and Baluchis.

## **1971 War**

In 1971 War, almost 2560 scouts from FC were sent to former East Pakistan, where new wings were raised. 26 scouts each from Mahsud Scouts were part of the contingent. No. 2 Mahsud Scouts was deployed on Western Frontiers, it was not a single entity rather in piecemeal. Some of his scouts were sent to East Pakistan and few were attached with No.2 Mahsud Scouts; collectively they wrote the finest chapter of this fabulous corps. There were fourteen platoons in No.1 Mahsud Scouts, four each of Mahsuds, Afridis, Bhattani and two of Brohis similar was the pattern in the other Mahsud Scouts

Mizh Mahsud were deployed at Mendar in Azad Kashmir, ably led by officers specially Captain Mujeeb Faqir Ullah Khan who embraced shahadat and was decorated with Sitara –i-Jurat so were lance Naik Wali Zar and Sepoy Abdul Haleem Brohi. No less than eighteen mahsud scouts embraced shahadat here.

## **1974.**

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<sup>3</sup> Frontier Corps an introduction, p-161.

<sup>4</sup> Frontier Corps an introduction, published 1967, pp156-167.

1974 is a momentous year in the history of Pakistan when the country was host to the Islamic Summit Conference at Lahore. On a lesser level but something of far reaching value was the bifurcation of the frontier Corps into the Frontier corps Baluchistan and frontier Corps NWFP. Thus 1<sup>st</sup> Mahsud which was already based in Shelabagh was amalgamated into the FC Balochistan and 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Scouts became part of FC NWFP ; till 1981 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mahsud Scouts was known as such but from this year onwards it was simply known as Mahsud Scouts.

In November 1974 the Mizh Mahsud was upgraded from one wing to three wing corps, thus the majority of pathan scouts of First Mahsud Scouts were incorporated in to the Second Mahsud Scout. The class composition was also altered with Afridi and Khattak having six platoons each, Turi having four, Orakzai , Mahsud , Mohmand and Bangash having three each, Mangal, Khalil Mohmand and Shilmani having two each.

### **Dir Operation 1976**

In 1976 Dir operation, the Corps also took part and accomplished the task assigned without suffering any casualty and won the praise of all. In March/April 1976, the Panj Pir issue arose, the anti-Panj Pir faction formed large lashkar and started burning the houses of Panj Pir in Khajuri plain. The government took serious view of this and directed to prevent the anti-Panj Pir faction from taking law in their hands. Mahsud Scouts came to the aid of political agent and its troops were deployed at Dogra post area to prevent the Afridis lashkar from destroying the Alam Gudar factory area. Apart from this, Mahsud Scouts also succeeded in preventing the lashkars from further burning the houses of Panj Pir in the Khajuri plain and the situation was brought to normal without any loss.

In July 1981 one wing was transferred to the Mohmand Rifles which again altered the composition the major change was the increase of Shilmani tribe which now had five platoons and Afridi strength was reduced to four platoons.

Corps was composed of two wings numbered 24 and 25 wings each having a strength of 698 scouts. Wings were commanded by majors, each wing had four rifle companies commanded by junior commissioned officers, rifle company was composed and organised on having three platoons and a platoon headquarters. A field battery was integral to the corps having a strength of 110 gunners who all were scouts , battery had 25 pounder guns. In the authorisation table the corps was supposed to have 20 officers and 55 JCOs along with 1559 scouts, 112 NCE and 15 NCu apart from 30 clerks; the most serious deficiency was in the category of officers. A lieutenant colonel was in command, major as his adjutant and quartermaster with another three or four captains performing as wing commanders. One medical officer was also part of the organisation.

Work load was not much but it was diversified , being reserves of IGFC the option of being deployed and employed anywhere in Pakistan was a reality and in later years Mahsud Scouts remained deployed in Sindh for well over three years in early nineties. Later when the corps was upgraded to three wings than no 26 wing was added. Fort Salop, Jhansi Fort and Fort Milward were the three forts and three wings rotated among these.

### **Shin Kamar Operation 1975**

Shin Kamar is an important pass which connects the Tirah , Maidan area with the Khajauri plains. Shin Kamar pass is as important as the Khyber Pass which is also close by and under control of Afridis. The best part of Shin Kamar is the relative ease and the availability of water all along. It leads to Tirah and then downward to Kabul valley. Tirah is almost 6000 feet in elevation.

Under Major General Naseer Ullah Babar SJ and bar, the IGFC of NWFP it was principally decided to push the writ of government to the Durand Line. Till then the tribal area was practically a no go area for the government.

In March 1975, the Mizh Mahsud took part in Shin Kamar operation in Khyber Agency when the dispute arose over construction of Fort Salop – Shin Kamar road between the government and the Afridis. The Afridi strongly resented it and tried to prevent its construction. Ist Mahsud Scouts troops had to be deployed in Shin Kamar (a restricted area) and accomplished task assigned to them with great success. In the end road was not completely constructed rather a track was made. The next issue was the check posts erected on the road and checking of smuggled goods. It must be kept in mind that one of the finest production of hashish is cultivated in Tirah Valley. Afridi's tribal economy is centred around hashish cultivation and further distribution all over the world or at least its sale in Bara, smuggling and transport are another two key features of Afridi life style. Thus the construction of road and subsequent check posts were not appreciated by them and they remained a bone of contention .

### **Shin Kamar Operation 1993**

On 22 February 1993, Zakha khel Afridis, who opposed the road construction from Shin Kamar to Tirah Valley and their chief Malik Nadar Khan raised a lashkar of 80-100 men including hired Afghans to stop the construction of road by force, for which they occupied strong positions in Shin Kamar, which dominated the surrounding area. To counter the hostile tribesmen, a mobile gasht of Mahsud Scouts reached Shin Kamar on 22 February 1993. The hostile lashkar opened fire on them. The troops with the concurrence of political authorities also returned fire with heavy weapons. The situation remained tense upto 04 March 1993. On 04 March 1993, Mahsud Scouts, with the help of Khyber Rifles decided to give a final blow to the hostile tribesmen and captured all their positions. After exchange of fire and physical assault dislodged the hostile tribesmen from their positions. The tribesmen suffered four deaths without any casualties on own side. Later the force returned to Fort Salop safely.

On 18 March 1993, it was reported that a lashkar consisting 100-120 men has again occupied the heights in Shin Kamar area and started firing rocket launchers, which continued till 19 March. However, after lot of efforts, the heights were cleared from the miscreants. Two tribesmen were killed on our side by miscreant's fire while troops suffered no casualty.

On 16 April 1993, lashkar consisting of 100 - 150 men again occupied the heights of Shin Kamar area. On 18 April 1993, morning, Mahsud Scouts started advance. The troops faced heavy fire. Later on, 25 Pounder guns started firing in support of the advancing troops the hostile lashkar abandoned their positions and withdrew.

In 1996 the situation again demanded interference of Mahsud Scouts. Sipah a sub tribe of Afridi also have certain territorial claims and rights in Shin Kamar. They in December 1996 took actions against known criminal Zaira Jan and Milat Khan on the Fort Salop –Shin Kamar Road. The firing continued from early morning till noon when political authorities requested Mahsud Scouts intervention, by the time own scouts arrived at the scene at 1630 hours the situation was receding. Milat Khan had died and Zaira Jan was wounded. One stolen car, one pick up and one suspect Khitab Gul was arrested.

These are not the last words about Shin Kamar as from new millennium onwards a new kind of terrorism dawn on the valley.

### **1980-2000**

In early sixties and till late seventies a tourist boom was encountered. People from all sphere of life would travel to Landi Kotal onwards to Kabul to watch Indian Movies. Landi kotal itself became a den of all kind of devilish activities. Pornography was common so was the hashish. Bara Market was centre of attraction for the people coming from down country for shopping. Soap, cloth, tobacco, parfumes , weapons and so on. It will not be out of proportion to write that no marriage was complete till the dowry is not purchased from Bara was a common theme then.

Afridi tribe became the richest tribe among all other pathan tribes and unfortunately all this wealth was centered around activities which put them into international limelight. In mid eighties the Heroin was introduced in the country so was Kalashnikov both now synonymous with Afghan Jihad of 1979-1989. Haji Ayub Afridi an ex khasadar who shot to fame in 1946 when he had fired a shot on the Nehru who later became prime minister of India while he was touring and addressing the frontier province. Ayub Afridi was the uncrowned king of Heroin smuggling, production and marketing; thus for these twenty years a regular flow of baramptas were conducted against mischievous clans. Regular internal security duties in connection with Muharram was another constant charter of duty. Sports, training and ceremonial aspects were major shades of life at Mahsud scouts. Water shortage at Fort salop was a matter of concern and in 1981 the boring of another tube well was carried out.

Independence Day celebrations were always colourful. Starting with Namaz Shukrana at 0700 prayers at all three forts , Salop, Jhansi and Milward, at 0800 hours address of commandant and at 0900 hours hoisting of flag and singing of national anthem. In the evening at 1700 hours a friendly match of either basketball or volleyball between the officers and JCOs the bara khana at 1930 hours and then a variety programme would finish the day in befitting manner.

In November 1981 a Brampta was carried out by Mahsud scouts under command Lieutenant Colonel Shah Dad khan with two companies of Mahsud scouts and two companies of Khyber Rifles in Dara Adam Khel ; eight persons were apprehended including much wanted Laiq Shah.

In 1982 an effort was made to name the wings after the heroes of 1971 War thus No.25 Wing became Mujeeb Wing, No.26 Wing was known as Wali Wing. However this did not last and old numbering of wings was resorted. Summer training of the corps was carried out with 27 Brigade which was stationed at Landi Kotal. On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1982 Major General Muhammad Afzal IGFC inaugurated the gate ceremony of Fort Salop. It was the efforts of Lt Col shah Dad khan who had given the charge of Mahsud Scouts to Lt Col Fazli Moeed SJ a month before the ceremony. In August 1982 the field battery was permanently transferred to Mohmand rifles including 3.7 inch howitzer. In the same time period construction of a workshop was undergoing at Jhansi.

Sports were the main attraction with teams going all over the Pakistan to take part in various competitions the inter company competitions were held and conducted at wing level then inter wing competitions and finally the inter corps matches as part of FC Week. Para teams were taking part in the meet on regular basis. It was in 1983 that MS won the coveted basketball trophy by beating KM at Parachinar by 53-45 points. In the inter wing declamation contest Sepoy Muhammad Ishaq stood first, Naik Imtiaz Ali of this corps stood second in inter corps declamation contest in 1983. 26 wing has the distinction of lifting the inter wing firing competition for the year 1983, in the same year the corps under Captain Qamar Ul Islam won the most coveted trophy of inter corps firing competition at Parachinar, so did the mortar platoon which also won the trophy.

Raising of third wing was carried out on 20 February 1986 and was given the serial number of No.27 Wing. It was in April 1986 that Besai feature was permanently occupied, eight platoons were initially employed and deployed.

### **Bara Operation 1987**

The first serious encounter took place in January 1987 when a tribal jirga of over 3000 lashkiris comprising of Afridis confronted Mahsud scouts near Sheekhan, resultantly three maliks were killed in the shoot out and many other were wounded. By 22<sup>nd</sup> January a tactical headquarter was established at Bara and reinforcement from army in the shape of 22 Cavalry was called upon. Lieutenant colonel Abdul Jamil commandant MS was the over all commander of the operation, additional wing from KR was also called in as reinforcement, a contingent from Thall Scouts also arrived on the scene on 23 January. It was only in the first week of March that the tactical headquarters was removed after the situation was brought under control. This was one rare occurrence otherwise the environment remained cordial. Afridi tribe has been a peaceful tribe and almost all its clans especially bordering the Peshawar like Malik Din Khel are realistic in mindset, preferring their economical outlook above everything else.

Gilgit 1988 was a sad tenure for the Mahsud Scouts, they had gone there in June in connection with sectarian riots which by itself was a rare incident at Gilgit till then. One scout Sepoy Mir Wali Mahsud of No.26 Wing was drowned in Gilgit River. The contingent remained there for another a year.

1988 however will be remembered for the fabulous performance of various sports teams. For the first time the inter corps championship was being held at Fort Salop's own basketball courts. Previously Mahsud Scouts used to organise such like events at Qayyum Stadium Peshawar. Mahsud Scouts won the basketball trophy beating Chitral Scouts on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1988. A month later Mahsud Scouts was host to inter Civil armed forces basket ball championship which was won by FC NWFP.

1988 elections again saw the Mizh Mahsud spread all over the province for the internal security duties. They were deployed at Abbottabad, Chilas, Manshehra, Shinkiari to name few.

***Mahsud Scouts in Sind.*** From February 1992 onwards Mahsud scouts were deployed in interior and urban Sindh. No.3 Wing was deployed at Moro to operate against the dacoits, they joined back in Khajauri Plains in September 1994. The frequency of brambtas increased from once a quarter, it was now every month and then becoming every week, number of gasht were also increased.. For instance in June 1992 one Brampta was carried out in general area Bara under command Captain Muddassar Bilal along with 58 scouts. Dacoit Khan Haider son of Bahadur Shalobar Kambar Khel was able to outwit the scouts but his brother Sher Haider and one other Ghulab Khan of same tribe were apprehended and handed over to political administration. Another such Brampta was carried out in Fort Milward area in connection with kidnapping of a air force officer but nothing was found.

An unfortunate incident occurred in January 1994, on 25<sup>th</sup> January a procession of students along with elders stormed past the Bara Bazar and threw stones on Mahsud Scouts posts, later incident of firing also started in which one student was killed. On 27<sup>th</sup> January a mobile gasht of 72 led by officers passed through Bara. It was after a week of negotiations that matter was resolved. It was again in 2000 onwards when similar unrest was caused by the students in Bara.

**Bajaur Operations of 1994.** Summer again found Mahsud Scouts moving back and forth. Two companies along with three officers and 202 other ranks including seven JCOs left Fort Salop on 21 July 1994, they were back to fort Salop on 28<sup>th</sup> July. One wing was deployed at Daggar and this

wing moved to Bajaur agency on 10<sup>th</sup> October v1994, later another wing comprising of 450 men also moved into the area on 10<sup>th</sup> November, Major Akhtar Mahmood was the commander of the force. There were few wounded casualties but they all were discharged after a fortnight. There was one incident of particular interest as it was the first such occasion in Mahsud Scouts. On 21<sup>st</sup> October 1994 Naik Miraj Ali Orakzai of 3Wing was shot dead by Sepoy Javed Hussain Orakzai. There have been instances of soldiers deserting the Mahsud Scouts running away with their weapons, there were two such incidents in the eighties.

Opening act of 1995 was the Mahsud Scouts led by Commandant Lt Col Sikander Ilyas Lodhi carried out a raid on Ilam Guddar factories on the night of 28/29 January and recovered approximately 3000 maund of charas, opium and heroin and also apprehended nineteen notorious anti social elements without any loss. Another major incident related to these seizures was an attack on the Mahsud Scouts convoy in July 1995 in which major Sana Ullah was wounded along with Naib Subedar Muhammad Riaz and Havildar Haider Ali of AC Squadron. The end result of the skirmish was the establishing of posts by the Mahsud scouts at Shin Kamar, Milaward, Besai -1 and 2. Two officers of Mahsud scouts were kidnapped by the locals in August, Captain Wisal Muhammad and Captain Mohsin Ali both were released after a day without any harm.

The Afridi's are very keen as far as the compensation is concerned, irony of fate is that drivers of Frontier corps are bit dare devil in these stony tracks. Killing of a lamb or even hen under the wheels of mahsud scouts can arise a huge hue and cry calling for jirgas also as last resort, the main aim is to fetch as much price as possible. Thus a lamb of average value can fetch almost four times to his owner by dying down under the wheels of Mahsud Scouts.

On 27<sup>th</sup> October 1994 a boy of Aka Khel Afridi came under the vehicle of Mahsud scouts, luckily he was only hurt, he was taken by the Mahsud Scouts to the Peshawar hospital and while they were coming back the road was blocked and the scouts vehicle was forcefully snatched away. It was returned later on. There were a host of kidnapping in the area for ransom and as such many bramptonas were carried out. Commissioner income tax was kidnapped and later was shot dead and his body was abandoned in the area, it took place in September 1996. Consequently no less than two dosen houses were demolished in various localities. Another big seizure was carried out in September when 1125 kilograms of hashish, four kilograms of opium and bottles of liquor were recovered.

1997 initial days were full of Bramptas, in February no less than eight bramptonas were conducted on a single week i.e., 18<sup>th</sup>- 25<sup>th</sup> February. Rest of 1997 was practically spent in carrying out bramptonas which were meant to cleanse the area of unwanted persons and purify the environments free of drugs., both were daunting tasks in Afridi domain. These operations were carried out among all clans of Afridi, In august a Brampta was carried out in Malik Din Khel area, a day earlier similar operation was carried out in Sipah area.

### **Tree of Discord**

In 1989 when the present expansion of the fort was undertaken by the Subedar Major Khial Afridi, a wall was built around the fort, however on the road end which leads to Shin Kamar the gate of the fort was just on the edge with family quarters and playing fields across the road. There was a tree close to the family quarters which was an obstruction to the drivers and every now and then its bushes would damage the wind screen. Commandant ordered its cutting down, as the scouts gathered around for its cutting the local started gathering and by evening it became a political affair with local strongly rejecting its cutting as it was on their lands. The operation was postponed and similar efforts were made

by all subsequent commandants but tree remained defiant. It was finally in 2010 that when the wall was built around the fort only then it was cut down , it was not used for any purpose rather the trunk is lying in the open, lest the owner comes back and ask for the property.

### **Last days of Millennium**

The last major Brampta of 1999 ended in the death of Sepoy Hussain Khan Shilmani and sepoy Khobiya Khan was injured. Brampta was carried out on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1999, to apprehend notorious outlaw Bahadur Khan. The force was led by Major Naseem along with Captain Sanaullah and Shahid Khan. The outlaw house was cordoned but intensive fire from the house kept the force at bay till these two valiant scouts stalked forward and shoot the Bahadur Khan, in the process Shilmani died on the spot due to wounds and Khobiya Khan survived. Both were recommended for Sitara i Basalat.

In November 1999 the over all command structure of all Frontier corps was elevated thus now a Colonel became the commandant with lieutenant colonels as wing commanders. Colonel Zakir Hussain was the first commandant in such capacity.

### **2000-2008**

World underwent a transition after 9/11 and its effects were felt all over the globe but Pakistan was the most affected country and region. Borders with Afghanistan were sealed and Taliban were restricted in movement. A war against militancy that started in 2002 is still going on in the tribal area.

Within Bara Valley or Khajauri Plains or more precisely within the area of operations of mahsud scouts the heat of war was felt from 2008 onwards. Initially the focus of counter insurgency remained in south Waziristan and slowly it spread upward engulfing North Waziristan and then into Swat valley and it was in 2009 that operation against Afridi was initiated. In terms of tribes the Mahsuds bore the brunt of this militancy followed by Wazir. Different splinter groups emerged some were loyal to the government and other were not. This was the first and major insurgency that took place along the Western frontiers since 1919 .

### **Mizh Mahsud 2000-2007**

Life in Mahsud Scouts was not affected much by the war against terror, there are many facets of tis aspect. Historically very seldom the whole of patahn tribes have risen together, last it happened was in 1898 with tirah uprising. Frontier Corps as a whole took it in stride and gave an composed outlook. There were regular and palnned competitions in sports, qirat, declamation, firing, band, and annual week was the Wimbeldon of the year. All corps commanders alongwith subeadr majors and representatives of all qaums would gather at all the corps headquarters honoured by President of Pakistan or Prime Minister or Chief of army, navy or airforce, governor , IGFC, and son on. Mahsud scouts had a wonderful time, its teams and fireres brought laurels after the laurels , they wee almost unbeatable at fort salop in any competition including band.

Their most signifacnt contribution was the Mahsud army Public school which was opened on 20<sup>th</sup> april 2000 by IGFC Major General Taj Ul haq and Commandant zakir hussain. In October 2003 Qirat competition was held at Landi Kotal, Mahsud scouts naib Khateeb Shah Hussain obtained eight position; very next year competition was held at DFort Salop in February and Mahsud Scouts were adguded second in Hifz and third in Qirat, week later firing team in inter unit firing competition held at Thall stood seventyh. Mizh mahsud stood second in the orienteering competitionheld at landi Kotal on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2003.



Mahsud scouts performed well in the courses too, lance naik Ali Marjan Afridi stood second in FC course of 82mm Mortar. In the religious teachers declamation contest also held at Fort Salop in August 2004, Naib Khateeb Muhammad Khan stood first with Tochi Scouts second and Chitral Scouts third.

Haiti, Naik mBakht Wali Khattak, Naik Hayat Khan Yousafzai and Lance Naik Fida Muhammad have the distinction of being the pioneers among Mahsud scouts; they are the very first to serve overseas with UNO at Haiti Police, they departed on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2004. In 2007 the last year of peace in the valley, Basketball championship was organised at Landi Kotal the Mahsud scouts stood second. Football championship was held at Parachinar in June, Mahsud scouts lost all matches and stood 12<sup>th</sup>.

PAF trainer aircraft crashed at Murad Talab on 8<sup>th</sup> June both pilots ejected safely and Mahsud scouts cordoned the area.

Change of command. Colonel Mahmood Raza was reverted to army after completing his tenure of command and he was taken over by Colonel Mujahid Hussain a gunner on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2007.

First wave of trouble in Bara started in April with the student demonstration and razing of Manag Bagh; however real trouble in Bara Valley started on **1<sup>st</sup> September 2007** when the Taliban announced their arrival in the valley by carrying out blast and dropping written warning. After forty eight hours the conspiracy was cleared when the real culprits belonging to Badr Mujahideen and Jaish Muhammadi were arrested who confessed of the blast; they were picked up by the Mangal Bagh men and tried them. By this act Mangal Bagh or Lashkar i Islami took the notion of victory, it was very similar to the killing of Kirri group in Miranshah by Taliban in December 2005.

From this point onwards Lashkar i Islami men started roaming inside the Bara bazaar carrying weapons and khassadars just turned their eyes other way around. Mangal Bagh showed his force on 11<sup>th</sup> September by entering the bazaar from Shalobar Chowk and exiting Alhaj Market in a procession of forty vehicles all armed to teeth.

### **Nari Qarwal Post.**

This post is a classic example of frontier warfare and how it differs from the standard warfare or conventional warfare. The post was established in June after the clashes of Namdar and Zareef group, now Namdar group had the reservation about the location of post as due to its height it in their opinion violates their purdah, flexibility is the key word in frontier warfare, in the end the political administration carried out a meeting with elders, on the site inspection was carried out and in the end very amicably the post was adjusted as per the satisfaction of the tribes and hostilities renewed. On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2007 Namdar group lost four of its men where as Zareef had one dead in the battle of ego.

Arrival of tanks at Fort Salop, it was 23 September 2007 at 1545 hours when the three tanks arrived at Fort Salop from armoured corps centre, it has been after the years that tanks have arrived at Fort Salop, they certainly imposed themselves. Later in the time the tanks crossed Shin Kamar Pass as well, first time in the history of the area that tanks have crossed Shin Kamar pass.

Lashkar i Islam had an eye ball contact with Mahsud Scouts who stopped them entering into Bara Bazar with weapons. Lashkar grudgingly complied with instruction but showed its side by checking the people for not wearing cap. ' Ghunads of Lashkar i Islam have started taking law into their hands and political administration is taking it lightly, it is recommended that our troops be allowed to

shoot if the ghundaas repeat such like incidents'.<sup>5</sup> Mahsud Scouts further increased its strength by placing additional scouts at Minara.

Political administration on the other hand had a feather in the cap when both Kuki Khel and Qambar Khel tribes agreed on the construction of Levies training centre at Bara, the agreement was reached at Khyber house Peshawar on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2007. There are factions among the Afridi tribe and each faction is realistic in nature and looks after own interest first. Afridis did not allowed the Taliban to disrupt their trade route passing through the Afridi land; it is something different if a faction among themselves starts playing with fire even then the Kuki Khel kept Managl Bagh away from their area.

**Death of an apotheosis'** . There was a man called Shirin Khan among the Qambar Khel who often used to claim himself to be a prophet, he was mentally sick and as such was given the benefit of doubt by the jirga, however on 18<sup>th</sup> September at noon the Qambar Khel men gathered around Sheeren's house and after fifteen minutes of wait started indiscriminate firing and later went satisfied.

### **Fort Salop.**

It is the home of Mahsud Scouts, they occupied it in 1961 but the fort has a history of its own. It was constructed in 1930 as a result of Khajauri Operations.

Fort Salop today is the headquarters of the Mahsud Scouts, Fort did not have any outer boundary wall, almost all the forts constructed in Khajauri Plains by the British did not have any outer boundary, it was in 2010 that Colonel Naseer Janjua the commandant initiated the project and completed within his tenure a remarkable feat indeed, it is worth mentioning that Colonel Janjua has a reputation of building walls around the Forts he did it at Boya where he was commanding a wing in Tochi Scouts. The present office block which stands majestically in the heart of the Fort Salop was also completed by him.

Fort today covers an area of 10 acres with a twenty feet bricked wall all around having sentry towers at regular intervals, the water source is well, initially there was only one well but now two wells cater for the water requirement, there is electricity with generators as stand by. The complete construction of the fort which excluding the main office block and new medical inspection room dates back to early days; it consists of tin roof huts and long elongated barracks, the roof is invariably painted in red colour. In last five years it has gone through major renovation which are still underway. The current project is to construct the bunkers for the troops and already three such bunkers have been completed by Colonel Naeem Sarwar since taking over command in mid January 2013

Fort has a main gate which is a new one due to construction of wall, after a distance of 500 meters stands the old and original building, it had a wall which was removed or pulled down in post 1947. Inside the fort the troops residential area is on the east where as the office blocks stand in centre with officers mess and officers residence including commandant house adjacent. A central small park with a miniature lake, Birds cages adorning it.

On the outer perimeter the artillery, armour and signals occupy the main grounds with sentries posted on the posts round the clock. In recent years Fort has been receiving mortars from the Afridis on regular basis. There are six families of troops and three families of officers residing inside the fort.

It receives fresh ration on every Wednesday, pay is collected on the first of every month from Peshawar and brought back to fort under heavy guard, pay day is a happy day. The area is generally

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<sup>5</sup> War diary. Special sitrep No. 150/13/x/G at 5.10.07

level with a very gradual slope. There are few old trees still left despite almost eighty years of living, the two oldest trees flank the office block on south. By and large soil is tough, water shortage has not helped in putting forward an orchard worth mentioning and neither there is any crop however small kitchen gardens still add colour to the dinning tables of officers and other ranks. The lambs issued as part of fresh ration are a regular sight, they move in herd and spend the days nibbling on what ever grass is available.

### **Sheen Kamar**

On Wednesday I went to Sheen Kamar which means *green* mountains, it was not planned to visit it not planned to visit today but then Major Imran informed me in the morning that the trip is planned. Myself and Captain Ehtisham along with an escort. The Fort Salop controls the route as it is constructed on the eastern descent of the Pass. This pass is as important as the Khyber Pass it is inhabited by the Zia Khel tribe of Afridis. We drove out, it was sunny and warm. The very first village outside the fort is deserted now. The original road used to pass along the boundary of the fort similar to Boya Fort in North Waziristan.

The road is a constant climb but it is gradual, on our right the branch of Bara River flows mostly dry with only a silver lining of water, the village of Besai is located on a high plateau with houses well spread, having plenty of tree. As one climbs up through winding road one comes across instances of it being blown up by the miscreants which in this case is Mangal Bagh.

Mangal Bagh is the war lord of the area couple of years ago he was a conductor on the Bar-Peshawar bus and according to the commandant has made money through selling of hashish.

After twenty odd minutes of drive the Sheen Kamar Pass is arrived, it is a narrow pass where in 2000 the project of constructing the road linking the area with Tirah was inaugurated and completed after two years. It is not a marvel of engineering feat but a mark of political acumen. The Afridi tribe is known for its commercial acumen and many a times the various factions have split among themselves chiefly on the issue of having more share in the trade. I met Lieutenant colonel Faisal of Swat Scouts, he was waiting with his junior commissioned officers at the pass. I feel bit embarrass in having being given this honour it speaks of the officers. Faisal has joined directly from Lahore where he was commanding the Guides cavalry. What a shock it must be to him to come from such an illustrious regiment to become part of Swat Scouts. He did not showed any resentment. Very courteous and polite officer who seems to be learning the ropes of the area. We drove forward now the area on our left was open green wide valley and on our right it was a mountainous range. Soon we reached the turn from where one track leads to the right the old pass if one can call it. We pass through another village and reach the last post of Swat Scouts where two tanks were parked in awkward position. Tanks are being used here in direct firing role. Our next and last stop was the village defence committee post.

It looked like any Taliban post, there was one sentry carrying a Kalashnikov and standing tall and proud on a fortified bunker, another young man was giving the sentry duty in the cover of a olive tree and another one bit far looking at the approaches from tirah. There is only one way and that is the road through which vehicles can move although any one can come down from the adjoining hill which is on the right of the road. My interest in these men was to see how these natives fight and live, it is purely luck that these are now enemy of Managl Bagh whom they lovingly call Mangli. The only reason that these men have turned against him is due to the fact that Mangal is from Sepah tribe a sub caste of Afridi where as these men are from Zia Din Khel sub tribe of Afridi's. This is the art of frontier warfare

and this is where the political agent comes in handy by dividing the tribes . these sub tribes are more concerned about their own interests than looking after the ideological values of Managl Bagh.

. The interesting feature about these **village defence committee** is that they are the the true and classic militia which Machiavelli was so profoundly fond of and propagated. The English Militia of 17<sup>th</sup> Century is another example of these militia; the natives taking care of the town and villages against the miscreants. English militia was paid and fed upon public tax which was levied for the occasion and purpose. Here at **Sheen Kamar** pass these men of Zakha Khel tribe are fed by the Mahsud Scouts or the political agent indeed. The weapons or more precisely the ammunition is provided by the Mahsud Scouts on behalf of political agent; this is how the Frontier Corps took birth. The Turi Militia of Kurram Valley was the very first example among pathan otherwise Colonel Durand had raised Gilgit Scouts in 1889.

We bid them farewell after embracing each other which is the custom as well you cannot enter or leave a post without shaking or embracing each other it may be just touching but it has to be done. On our way back the valley was now on our right, in front the Bara Valley lush green. This greenery here is deceptive because these are not fruit trees rather shrubs, there is one particular shrub known as gurgoray which has small fruit and is eaten. This route connects Tirah with Bara valley and is much pleasant than the Khyber Pass , its only limitation is its rather bit of extent as compare to Khyber which I have not seen yet.

There was an old grave yard next to Zaka Khel post across the track, I was narrated by one of the tribesman as being an old graveyard which was told to them by their grandfathers. We stopped by at one oasis like place to see the caves, after walking through the bushy track led by the Mahsud Scouts we entered the mouth of a cave and then I followed the others , it was dark and cool. The light of mobile phone was not enough to guide but I managed it and followed other , through a labyrinth of turns we all reach at the end which was a circular flat mud end. The height was good enough even for me to walk straight and erect. We made our exit through another way and suddenly found ourselves on a open patch with trees around. These caves are man made they re all around, they are in villages along the way. They were and are used to keep the animals insides in winter and also the humans. Their defensive value is beyond words to explain. In old times and still the tribes in time of war especially the women and children can take refugee here and so can the militia.

## **Tuesday.**

I woke up at 0730 hours rather the waiter came to wake me up. The room where I am staying has an attached room as well and the person came out of the room thus I was bit at loss whether he is an officer who is living next door or an attendant; it is difficult to judge when all are wearing kameez shalwar and that too early in the morning. It was a bright sunny day, I ordered a cup of tea which was not good somehow the other it is difficult to find a decent cup of tea everywhere. Major Imran who is performing the duty of DQ was my guide and we had to go to Fort Jhansi first and then to the Fort Miliward and back. It looks simple but last night I had a second thought on the whole trip. There is a cease fire with the Taliban and everyone seems to be bit relaxed but I am a firm believer and so are many others who regard these cease fires and agreements as a lull before the storm , none knows when the hell is going to break out but everyone consoles other with these words of peace.

I am still not very much clear about the direction of north, it is only after ascertaining the north that one can make a relationship between geography and history. We left the fort in a hilux with another hilux having our escort. In the vehicle I sat behind with Major Imran and o an ambush laid on us and the reaction of the scout; not a very good feeling. The main reason is the easy attitude of everyone here and secondly it seems almost impossible to stop an suicide attack or ambush, both rare in this area as

compared to north Waziristan. We passed Shaaks Fort, area is green with plenty of shrubs 'keekar' but not of plantation or crops. Initially the passage out from fort passes through a culvert, then burnt out and destroyed shops a sharp bend, another destroyed culvert and drive straight then comes the small town of Qambar Khel. It is not like a typical frontier town rather an urban outskirts of Peshawar. Wall chalking regarding the election {it is due today on NA 4 I believe} it has been postponed in the initial 11 May elections. The moment I saw few women clad in burqa walking in the stony causeway I felt relax. Their walking and presence outside is an assuring sign of peace and modern enlightenment of the area. There were school boys all clad in white dress although in Frontier they wear militia colour; could be a private school. I am not wrong if I write that I have seen maximum wall chalking in FATA regarding the private schools. Males were sitting idle on the roadside probably waiting for polling but it could be custom or habit also, none was carrying any kind of arms

### **Fort Jhansi & Fort Milward**

These two forts are other two major forts in the area, first one is in fact Fort Shakas which is a rather new construction it was handed over to FC in 1982. Fort Jhansi comes first, its crow distance from Salop is not more than four kilometers but as the area is infested with mines/IED and ambush sites thus a long detour is forced upon. The road is now a track with often blown up culverts and almost all houses are demolished partially or complete. The area around belongs to Malik Din Khel clan, they are more business like and have soft attitude towards the FC. For Jhansi one has to pass astride the road running parallel with Hayatabad but on one side is the settled area and other side is free tribal area.

**Bara Bazar** the hub of Mangal Bagh is now deserted like a ghost town, there are over 7500 shops in the two miles stretch of road all dealing with hashish and weapons. These markets have been occupied by the Khyber Wing of Khyber Rifles under command of Mahsud scouts. The shops have their wares intact, they have fabulous rooms upstairs with woodwork and carpets. From Bara we drove past Dogra which is an army unit headquarters, the track is in dirt with bushes all around, needless to say that no defence against IED is possible in such terrain, other than jammers but you cannot do much about a pressure mine. At Dogra which used to be a Sikh outpost is now a complex of three factories owned by Haji Ayub Afridi who himself died couple of years ago.

**Jhansi** is on the bank of Bara River, an old post constructed in 1928, it looks after the area which is plain. There is no wall around the fort, there is a squadron of armour, battery of artillery and so on. Construction is all barracks and plenty of them are here. Two years ago it came under an fire attack from Mangal Bagh men. It has a beautiful Chinaar garden as well which was constructed in 1980 by the wing commanders. All along there was noise of jets flying over head. Conversation revolves around the activities of the miscreants, morale high.

Fort Milward is the last of the forts on the southern edge of the valley, there are two more forts like Kishengarh but it is not under Frontier Corps. Milward had a worst scenario when nine scouts including the wing commander were killed in an ambush.

**Fort Milward** remained with FSF till 1976 then it was handed over to FC. Fort is not that big but it has open spaces with Bara River branch running on the southern edge, There are Kiker Trees all around with very little space for irrigation. I had a briefing at Milward and also the lunch. Most of buildings have been repaired and altered but still a vast number of original hutments. Families of troops six-ten live in every fort and face the same music as the men are facing. Light is rare but there are generators and their use is quite liberal.

### **Operation Sirat –e- Mustaqeem**

On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2008 much awaited operation against Magal bagh started under code name Sirat-e-Mustaqee. One troop of tanks ex 21 Hoirse, own tank and two APC apart from bomb disposal parties established road block on Bara – Tirah road, first objective was to capture the Gandhao Post from miscreants. Commandant Colonel Mujahid Jussain led the operation. Post itself was vacant but surrounding heights were occupied. The suspected bunkers were destroyed through tank fire; this resultantly compelled the miscreants to move into the Tirah Valley, one miscreant was killed. Mangal bagh own house was also demolished using explosives, Kohi Markaz was partially damaged at 1830 hours and force came back to Fort Salop. Curfew was imposed in the Bara sub division for the day. One wing of tochi scouts was also present at Fort Salop.

On 29<sup>th</sup> June at 1340 hours the ansar Islam lashkar markaz was also demolished. On the same day while coming back the private jail of Mangal bagh at Kohi was also demolished, it was reported by the locals about its presence and location.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July Ilm Guddar was the target, one kidnapped person Gul Miran Kuki Khel was released from the bondage, three abductees were also caught. Pir House was under the control of Mangal Bagh, it was also freed after a heavy shoot out in which four miscreants later surrendered to the Mahsud scouts. On 2<sup>nd</sup> July, Bara area was combed and sanitised, patrolling was carried out through Kohi, Mandi Kas, Dogras, Spin Qabar and back to Fort Salop, eleven persons belonging to Mangal Bagh group were arrested along with eight SMG and two 9mm rifles.

### **Mahsud Ambushed**

**8<sup>th</sup> July 2008** in real sense brought the war to the Mahsud Scouts, one vehicle was coming from Hayatabad to Fort Milward in relation with an administration duty of Dairy Farm. One kilometre short of the Fort Milward, both single cabin vehicles, one carrying milk and other as the escort came under fire, area is thick with growth providing ample opportunities for any killing party. After fifteen minutes of firing four scouts of Mahsud had embraced shahadat and other eight were injured. Naik Abdul Rehman Bhattani, Naik Rehmat Ullah Mahsud, Sweeper Manzoor and lance Naik Muhammad Zahoor Shilmani were among the dead. Surprisingly only two SMG and one Rifle G-3 were missing; it was all they were carrying.

By end August all additional troops were deinducted from the Shakas, . Haji Namdar group took on the Taliban head on, they carried out an ambush on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2008 killing three persons of Tehreek Taliban Pakistan {TTP} and one was injured. On the same five more persons of TTP were kidnapped by Haji Namdar group.

### **September 2009**

Month of September began with miscreants attack on Fort Milward, they attacked with mortars and RPG-7 but they landed short of gun positions. On 11<sup>th</sup> September three more guns of 130mm calibre reached Fort Milward from Jamrud. Mangal bagh also kidnapped one Tandal of Mahsud scouts, Rahat Gul Afridi who was kidnapped by Mangal bagh group but later released on the intervention of political administration, it was a case of misunderstanding. In another similar case Subedar Daulat Khan was coming with his family when he was taken away on gun point, his family was left unhurt. In retaliation Mahsud scouts in next two days arrested no less than twelve persons belonging to the Mangal Bagh group. On 22 September in an abortive ambush laid by Mangal Bagh the scouts retaliated and resultantly four miscreants were killed.

### **December 2008. Operation Daralam**

In mid December the local population took out a procession for the supply of electricity however it was the dying days of the year when the operation DarAlam was put into action on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2008. The force comprising of one company of 3 Sind regiment, company of Mahsud scouts, platoon of SOG, Troop of tanks from independent armoured corps squadron {IACS} and bomb disposal team, air was on call thus an air contact team was also taken along; Commandant Mahsud scouts led the force. At 1100 hours Cobra gunship helicopters were called in which softened up the target at Qadwar Killi, nine rounds of tanks and 11 mortar bombs also punished the target area, 10 AK regiment's battalion mortars were also in support. Target was nothing but a compound comprising of three mud houses belonging to Saifur and Adamjee, all in all seventeen persons belonging to various tribes were arrested.

On last day of year, the force left Fort Shakas at 0900 hours and cordoned houses in Sher Sakhi colony at 1030 hours. Over 300 houses were searched and 119 suspects were arrested. Najeib house was the next target, Najeib himself surrendered and his house was demolished, 126 suspects were arrested out of which there were 63 locals and 63 Afghanistan. Haji Monin was the next on line and he also surrendered along with six of his followers to the force, his house was also demolished.

## **2009**

Operation Dar Alam continued with force again setting out of Fort Shakas under command Commandant Mahsud Scouts. Adamjee House was the target which was cordoned off at 0930 hours, composition of force remained almost unchanged from the first day of operation. Adamjee was arrested and house demolished. Jandol's house was next to go, 502 cartons of meal ready to eat of NATO was recovered, two more houses were demolished namely that of Johar and Obaidullah both were razed to ground. Weapons were recovered but they were neither modern nor deadly in nature, one 8mm rifle, one 7mm rifle and couple of hundred of rounds. Alamdar's house was the last to be demolished on the very first day of year. All in all 143 suspects were arrested.

2<sup>nd</sup> January was no different from other days as force set out from Fort Shakas at 0700 hours, Wazir Dand market in Jamrud was cordoned, 50 odd shops were demolished with excavator. Another operation was carried out at Hayat Khan Serai at 0900 hours, force then moved towards Kharkhano where two markets were demolished and at 1100 hours house of Zalmai was demolished. Most of the items recovered were of commercial value like Wine bottles {63 in number} hashish packets {35} opium seven packets, heroin half kilogram, few odd weapons and fake currency all trade marks of Afghani enterprise. On 3<sup>rd</sup> January, wall chalking of different groups was removed by a force under command Lt Col Asif.

The big catch was found on 4<sup>th</sup> January, Jalat Khan's house was searched and explosive laden vehicle and suicide jackets were found. Operation continued into second week of January as well with search of houses and their demolishing creating a favourable impact among the local population, slowly but gradually the area was being cleared of anti social elements and miscreants. Majority of the suspects were mainly anti social elements very few were miscreants in true sense. Uptill 10<sup>th</sup> January more than 200 suspects were arrested, in the process many kidnapees were recovered and equal number of kidnappers were arrested, stolen cars were also handed over to the political administration. One Saudi national Zaibi-ul-taifa was also arrested in one of the search operation carried out on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2009. One side effect of these operations was the breaking down of Taliban's administrative support, all their supportsw were being taken to the task, workshops where the miscreants were getting their vehicles repaired were closed down and mechanics arrested.

By end March the operation was called off after desired results were achieved. Biggest cache of arms were recovered from Haji Market in Alam Guddar area, Wahid and Saifoor two most wanted criminal houses were demolished, 31 suspects were arrested, weapons confiscated included 75mm RR, RPG-7, 12.7mm gun, 82mm Mortar to name few. Narcotics factories at Alam Guddar were also arided in the last week of March where 80 kilograms of hasish was confiscated from one house. The over all catch was 50 tons of hasish. By last week of March the focus was shifted towards the aka Khel area.

### **Dr Khan Kidnapped**

An operation was launched in the first week of May 2009. It started after the frontier Constabulary bus was hit on 7<sup>th</sup> May with an IED cnear the Kohat Tunnel resultantly three constabulary men were injured. On 11<sup>th</sup> May an suicide attack was carried out against the constabuklary, one embraced shahadat and sevben othes were injured.

Dr Khan Bangash the honorary captain and subedar major of 3 Wing alongwith Sepoy Sajjad Bangash were kidnapped by miscreants while he was travelling in his own vehicle, they were travelling from Salim Podst towards Milward Fort

May also saw the conflict between the khassadars and mahsud scouts, the back ground was that on 17<sup>th</sup> May avehicle was suspicious enough to warrant checking, the occupants simply rushed towards the near by khassadar post at Sheikhon Bridge. The khassadars started protecting the men who have atken refugee inside by claiming them to be khassadars a scuffle erupted. After an hour the QRF was sent to apprehend the miscreants this QRF came under heavy fire at Bara. Later Lt col asif went inside the post but after heated discussion the khassadar subeadr simply cocked his weapon but Lt col asif boldly grabbed the weapon and arrested the Subedar. Later these khassadars were handed over to the political administration, all khassadrs were from qambar Khel tribe. Cobras punished the Khawangi in Aka Khel area as part of Eagle Swoop operation on 30<sup>th</sup> May.

### **MI-17 Helicopter**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009 a MI-17 helicopter of Army aviation crashed in Orakzai agency. Mahsud Scouts were task to reach the crash site, Commandant alongwith QRF managed to reach the site, helicopter was completely destroyed and all passengers were burnt to death. Since the wreckage was found close to tariq afridi markaz thus it was suspected taht he has something to do in this regard. Next day an aircraft accident investifgtn team was atken to the site, a company of 4 FF was also part of this force. A Cobra provided aerial support, however when the Cobras went for refuelling the army and Mahsud scouts came undere intense fire from adjoinihng heights. 55 Miscreants were reported to be killed in this skirmish.<sup>6</sup>

In july miscreanst targets were shelled mainly on intelligence reports, house searches were also carried but more emphasis was laid upon checking the movement of locals and their acrs. Not much was found other than opium and hasish which was being smuggled into the settled areas. It was reported taht majority of attacks carried out in Peshawar have their base in Bara. On 12<sup>th</sup> july 2009 an operation was conducted in Bara early in the morning bat suspected palces art shinko, Qambar Khel. Air cover was provided by gunship helicopters, few houses were destroyed alongwith two vehicles. In another operation carried out on intelligence tip, house of Jan Muhammad was searched, Haviladar said habib

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<sup>6</sup> War diary Mahsud scouts.



was awarded with a captured 12 Bore shotgun for his exemplary bravery in the operation during which seven suspects were arrested.

### **Nigerian Kidnapees**

On 29<sup>th</sup> July an operation was conducted in Sipah area where six Nigerian kidnapped by Mangal bagh group were kept in a private jail, they were released from bondage, two of the kidnappers belong to Zakha Khel tribe where as he hired was from Shinwarei tribe.

Sepoy Muhammad Arif Afridi, embraced shahadat in one such operation, it was conducted on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2009 on a Mangal bagh group house, extensive fire was exchanged, Mahsud Scouts fired 26 rockets of RPG-7, the highest in any one operation. Arif was shot dead while he was chasing a miscreant. Another high intensity fire exchange took place on 10<sup>th</sup> August in which three scouts were injured. This location in Qambar Khel Azarai Shalobar was kept engaged next day also employing Cobra helicopters, one company of Mahsud scouts a company of Khyber rifles, SOG-1 company and one tank took part in the operation. On 13<sup>th</sup> the Khyber rifle company was hit with an IED resultantly three scouts of Khyber rifles embraced shahadat while four others were injured.

Mahsud scouts apart from these sting operations was also carrying out regular gasht in the area, mostly of two or three hours.

**14<sup>th</sup> September 2009** was another eventful day, a search and cordon operation was carried out in Malik din Khel area, at 1400 hours the QRF moved out from Fort Salop and after an hour of driving was at the site, it was the house of Taj Muhammad and Asghar Khan nothing was found thus the search operation was extended another 500 meters ahead and this is where the things went wrong, the fire from miscreants took the life of Sepoy Sadiq Hussain Turi and Lt Col Muhammad Kamran was hit in the shoulder with a bullet. Mahsud scouts killed four miscreants in this encounter and three were caught. Tanks fired 18 rounds, 11 RPG-7 were fired and over 700 rounds of 7.62 mm were fired apart from throwing of 15 hand grenades. A mine in the form of anti tank mine was detected in mid September in Shin Kamar area.

By the start of winter patrolling, mobile gasht and check post were erected all around the area and suspects were being caught and handed over to political administration on daily basis. Suspects were either interrogated by the intelligence set up of Frontier Corps or by the army. After intensive scrutiny the people were classified as white or black, white means that person is cleared and as such was then released from custody.

In October the Fort Salop was hit hard by the miscreants using mortar and rockets which are non precision out of ten rockets which they fired six landed inside the fort., damage was minor with only five scouts receiving splinters, one was treated by own doctor and four others were referred to CMH Peshawar.

### **31<sup>st</sup> October 2009**

A black day for Mahsud scouts, at 1145 hours the routine patrolling of the area was being conducted on a Toyota single cabin vehicle, it was a sunny day with breeze flowing, Naaib Subedar Granbadshah was sitting on the front seat, they had left Fort Salop and were heading towards the Sudur Gar area when a blast happened, it was a remote controlled IED, seven scouts embraced shahadat on the spot. There were two vehicles, the other vehicle remained unhurt and they evacuated the casualties to the Fort Salop.

In retaliation an extensive patrolling was conducted to apprehend the culprits eight persons all from Malik din Khel tribe were arrested on 6<sup>th</sup> October, one Mahsud scout Seppoy Said Nabi Jan embraced shahadat while two more suffered injuries. Meanwhile Fort Salop was also targeted by miscreants and no less than 30 shells were received within a span of an hour, however damage was not much only four scouts were injured. Ganado Post was next to be targeted a fire and was carried out by miscreants. Same day [20<sup>th</sup> November 2009] a QRF of Khyber rifles was victim of an IED when it was proceeding to Shin Kamar for the provision of action and fresh to the scouts deployed there, one Havildar Muhammad Ashraf embraced shahadat while three others were injured. A QRF of Mahsud scouts then went to the site for evacuation, it also supplied the much needed ration to the post at Shin Kamar.

### **Khawak Ba De Sham 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

In November 2 Wing of Mahsud Scouts and 1 Wing of Khyber Rifles took part in the above named operation which was conducted in the valley to apprehend the miscreants behind recent surge of violence. Fire support was provided from Fort Salop in the form of 130mm and 25 pounder artillery fire. 9 NLI and 40 FF were the two infantry regiments who spearheaded the operation. Corps Commander and IGFC Major General Nadir Zeb visited the Mahsud Scouts on 2<sup>nd</sup> December

Media mob was briefed at Fort Salop on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2009, almost all media houses were present, most obnoxious was the Geo followed by Aaj and Express, most sensible was the PTV. The private media houses have only one concern and that is to make money out of a news irrespective of its authenticity.

During the operation houses were searched and sting operations carried out almost on daily basis. Last major operation was conducted on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> December 2009, ten people were held in custody, 100 kilogram of hashish was confiscated, Lewana who was the commander of miscreants was killed in a shoot out on 29<sup>th</sup> in area Yousaf Talao.

Induction of recruits. 9<sup>th</sup> batch of recruits had their passing out at Fort Salop, 198 recruits were trained by Mahsud Scouts, out of these 65 were posted in Mahsud Scouts and 113 in Thall Scouts with remaining posted to Orakzai Scouts. Alternatively these recruits were trained at Thall and Fort Salop. 12<sup>th</sup> Batch was passed out on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2009 at Fort Salop. In 2012 the recruits were being trained within the Mahsud Scouts at Fort Salop. For specialist training the courses were being arranged at Jalozaï or Warsak under HQFC. Field Firing and battle inoculation were also carried regularly. In June 2008 it was conducted at Nowshehra ranges

A new competition in line with environment was the inter unit sniper competition which was held at Swat Scouts in February 2009, two officers, one JCO and 10 scouts participated from Mizh Mahsud and stood fourth similar results were achieved in the inter unit small arms firing competition.

Colonel Naseer Janjua an armoured corps officer who had also served in Tochi Scouts took over the command on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

## **2010**

Year started with a peace for a week and then on 16<sup>th</sup> January Lt Col Sheraz of Mahsud Scouts who was recently posted to the Mahsud led an operation in Spin Qabar Khel, it was a whole day operation in which two companies of NLI also took part, thirteen soldiers of NLI were injured to miscreant firing. Two more search and cordon operation were conducted within a week and over two

dosen people were apprehended, this pattern remained in vogue in February as well. In March a deviation from standard teaching was made when on 17<sup>th</sup>, Mahsud Scouts also laid an ambush; two miscreants were injured. In April the poppy fields were destroyed in Dogra and Jhansi area. In May a joint operation with police was carried out and houses were destroyed in Jhansi first half of year was spent in area domination by patrolling and carrying out sting operation. In June an IED blast injured five scouts of Mahsud. Miscreants had little to retaliate, IEDs were blasted but luckily they did not caused much damage. Another factor was an improved equipment, initially Mahsud Scouts did not had any detector but now bomb disposal parties were well armed with latest technology and it made a visible difference.

## **Janjua Wall**

Colonel Naseer Janjua was the commandant of Mahsud Scout 2009-2011, a veteran cavalry officer who has commanded a wing in Tochi Scouts before being promoted. He had taken part in Kurram and more importantly in Swat; an officer who has been leading the scouts from front. It was Colonel Janjua who undertook the gigantic task of erecting a boundary wall around the Fort Salop which in true sense gives the feeling of fort and has enhanced the area and security of the Mahsud scouts to a level which is unprecedented since 1930 when the Fort Salop was constructed.

The length of wall is 8125 feet having a width varying between 18 inches to 27 inches, its height at point is around twenty feet although at points it is twelve feet. Piquets numbering a dozen have been constructed at cardinal points all along the wall and covers all around. These piquets have sleeping area and washrooms adjacent. The piquets itself are spacious having size of 14 feet by 14 feet with an width of 27 feet. It is pucca brick wall, no less than 2.7 million bricks were used, these bricks were brought from Peshawar and daily almost four to six truck loads of brick was brought to fort. Fort Salop has serious shortage of water thus the construction of wall is commendable. 11700 cement bags were used, 21892 kilograms of T-iron has been incorporated in the wall to give it strength. 27 civilian masons were employed for the construction, the project started in January 2010 and was completed by January next year. Major Muhammad Amir was the project officer, Major Shoaib was the quarter master of the scouts and as such directly supervising the wall, Subedar {later Subedar Major} Abdul Waheed Bangash was the project JCO and Naik Azmat Bangash was the project NCO, Corps Subedar major Khalid Usman Khattak was another pivotal figure. Above all it was the driving force and personality of the Colonel Janjua which made all this possible. There were many stages in the construction which needs elaboration. The wall runs along the bed of the stream and during the flash floods of 2011 a portion of wall suddenly collapsed. Battalion Havildar Major Havildar Akbar Mahsud recalls 'there were six or seven scouts working at the time and i rushed to the spot, although all were safe yet i was not mentally at peace and it was only after carrying out a physical count of the scouts in the fort did i had a sigh of relief'. Now the wall has been altered in a way to let the water pass by.

This was the first major construction work undertaken by the Mahsud scouts in last thirty years and the wall is testimony to the fact that the skills of Mahsuds are unmatched even today as far as the construction is concerned, let it not be forgotten that it was the construction for which Mahsud battalions were raised. It was a time of great achievement, the insurgency was getting off the ground in Bara Valley and as such the wall came very handy when the full weight of military was thrust in the valley and the miscreants retaliated, wall proved to be insurmountable. Above all wall created a sense of achievement and a bond among the Mahsud scouts. Their living for a year centred around this wall, all night work remained in progress, extra tea and edibles were prepared, officers took part with the scouts, Colonel Janjua practically breathed the wall till its completion.

In last thirteen years no other wall can match the grace, length and magnitude of this wall which was constructed under hostile environment. Today it stands a symbol of state's authority . wall cost 1,89,96,570 rupees. It was constructed by the Mahsud Scouts , no civilian labour other than the masons were employed.

**October Blast.** On 20<sup>th</sup> October 2010, an IEDE blast near Sur garh took the lives of Naik Altaf Khattak, Sepoy Ansar Khan Afridi and Sepoy Nawaz Orakzai, three other scouts were injured as well. In another accident which took place on 24<sup>th</sup> November at Shin Kamar another IED took the lives of three more scouts namely, Subedar Khan Alam Mahsud, Sepoy Ayub Gul Bhittani and Sepoy Ishaq Ali Turi and seven others were injured.

**2011** was no different from previous years but extensive and aggressive patrolling and area domination by the Mahsud scouts had lessen the hold of the miscreants but it was a continuous battle. Almost daily operations were carried out and suspects cbeing caught. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011 in an search and cordon operation carried out by 1W, 2W, 3W and 1W Khyber Rifles in Alam Guddar for the rescue of a kidnapped khassadar , a fierce fire fight erupted resultantly six scouts all sepoy embraced shahadat and two were injured.

IEDs did altered the way of warfare in Bara Valley, Mahsud Scouts posts are well spraed in the area and they all require replenishment of ration and ammunition apart from the administration of troops which includes their leave and training. On 17<sup>th</sup> October during one such replenishment at Jhansi, Dogra, Milward, Darro Adda, the convoys were hit with sniper and rocket launchers, eight soldiers of Khyber rifles and one from Mahsud scouts embraced shahadat and four others {all from Khyber rifles} were injured. On 20<sup>th</sup> October an operation was conducted in the area Nullah, it was one of the heaviest in terms of manpower, 1W,2W,3W of mahsud Scouts, 3W Khyber rifles, company e SOG, companies of Mohmand rifles, Chitral Scouts and swat scouts took part in it. Heavy exchange of fire resulted in the shahadat of Captain Ghulam Qadir, Havildar Muhammad qasim both from SOG and Sepoy Aslat Gul of Mohmand rirles, 12 other scouts were injured including two from Mahsud Scouts.

In an operation carried out in Arjali nadi , 106 suspects were arrested out of which 100 were released and only six were detained. Houses of miscreant commanders including Sher wali, Mada Gul and Hussain were demolished. Five more houses were burnt on 12<sup>th</sup> in Meri khel area. New posts at Khoi and Daulat Khel resulted in five more houses of miscreant being demolished, one miscreant was killed in this encounter as well. Big arms ache was found in the operation carried out on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2011 in general area Chargai Dograi, no less tahn 299 mortar bombs were captured from the miscreants. The Daulat Khel post was attacked by the miscreants on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2012 and four scoputs of Swat Scouts were injured where as Lance Naik Iftikhar Mohmand embraced shahadat.

## **2012- Maira Sar**

Maira Sar is the highest peak ion the area over looking the Fort salop and Shin Kamar Pass. 23 Baluch and 35 Azad Kashmir Regiments, 2W , 3W of Mahsud Scouts, 3W Khyber rifles and two companies of SOG were part of the force. Tactical headquarters was established at Shin Kamar. On 16<sup>th</sup> February 2012 aerial pounding was done in which Cobras and airforce jets took part followed by artillery fire, a troop of tank was also placed at Shin Kamar. It was a two prong advance with 8 AK regiment supporting the Lawata prong. Another feature of this operation was the induction of village defence committee{VDC} which comprised of loyal tribes, these are mainly broken away factions who are good in holding their own area by virtue of their knowledge of the area. On 17<sup>th</sup> maira sar was captured, sepoy ahmed Shah of Mahsud scouts embraced shahadat alongwith two other scouts

belonging to SOG and four persons of aman lashkar and three were injured. An IED blast in one of the 23 Baluch bunker on 18<sup>th</sup> took the lives of five soldiers.

In another related incident, Sniper fire on Nullah post resulted in an injury to Naik Amir Muhammad Bangash of Mahsud scouts, later a heavy contingent was sent to evacuate the injured soldiers, during the move back the QRF itself came under attack, three soldiers of 23 Baluch laid their lives while three others including two from Mahsud scouts were injured. The deadliest attack came on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012 at Maira sar when ten soldiers of 23 Baluch embraced shahadat and eight others were injured.

Alam Guddar was another hot spot where an operation was conducted on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 39 miscreants were killed while three of our soldiers including an officer of 17 FF embraced shahadat and ten others were injured including one from Mahsud scouts. Houses of suspected miscreant commanders including Maulvi faqir and Wazeer were demolished on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and 125 suspects were arrested. Rasool Jan Markaz was cordoned in the early hours of 22<sup>nd</sup> April by 2W{MS}, 3W KR, 17FF and 35 AK regiments in Aziz market area, markaz was demolished and five miscreants were killed.

## **June 2012**

1Wing QRF was on patrol under command Captain Manna Ul Hassan, as they reached near the Al haj market an IED blasted which ripped through the vehicle, Captain Manan, Naik tariq Mohmand, Lance Naik Kamran Bangash, Lance Naik Yousaf Bhittani, Sepoy Bahadur Shah Mohmand, Ali Badshah Afridi, Khan Afzal Bangash and Lance Naik Nawaz Gul Bangash of Khattak scouts all embraced shahadat while three other scouts were injured who were immediately evacuated to Peshawar. Captain Manan was a cheerful officer, his father always calls at Fort Salop whenever any accident is reported in media and prays for the safety of all.

Lashkar Islam was mostly busy in hit and run operations, they would use a pickup, park it at some place, sprinkle the place with water brought in a bucket, place the mortar and fire a few rounds, by the time their location is ascertained with the help of radars they simply move and flee into the thick growth. In one such raid carried out on Jhansi Fort on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2012, Sepoy Mohammad Khateeb Mahsud embraced shahadat. Miscreants fired 15 rockets out of which ten landed inside the fort, five scouts wounded which were taken to the Peshawar.

Evacuation of wounded by itself is an operation, on one hand is the early and speedy evacuation of the injured scout which directly affects the morale, on the other hand is the hard reality of endangering more scouts in the rescue operations. An elaborate decision has to be taken in time judging all the angles. Culturally the scouts do not care much about their own lives when it comes to the rescue of fellow scouts but at times commander had to wait for an hour to carry out the rescue operation.

December 2012. A constant and continuous skirmishes continued between the Mahsud scouts and miscreants, they resorted to sniper firing and Mahsud scouts carried out sting operations on suspected localities mostly on intelligence tips. Checking the movement of people in the area, domination of the valley and imposing the writ of state. IEDs remained the biggest threat in the area. In an incident on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2012 one such blast took the life of Sepoy Muhammad Hasim Youasfzai of 5Wing Swat scouts.

## **Ghundai Post, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012**

Perhaps the most devastating incident of the last few years when the post was attacked by the miscreants and were able to over run it and get away with a sizeable quantity of weapons, ammunition, artion and other items. It all started on 12<sup>th</sup> December at 1745 hours when the post acme under fire attack, initially mortars were fired by the miscreants which all fell short of it. Miscreants were engaged with artillery in eastern direction towards Mufti Madrassah. A heavy lashkar was reported by the post commander at 1818 at the base of the psot . By 1830 hours the base bunkers of the post had been captured by the miscreants. Reinforcement was sent but by 1855 hours Post Commander Subedar Wali Khan reported the situation to be out of hand due to overwhelming numbers of miscreants, at 1905 hours he informed about vacating the post along with 15 other scouts by 1910 it was all over post was in the hand of miscreants. The scouts after vacating the post had gathered at Kohi Post. A counter attack was being planned and troops were being move and they established positions by 2230 hours. They move foward and reached the top by 0230 hours; it was taken back. Sniper continued oin the post and it resulted in the shahadat of a sepoy Jahangir Khan Afridi on 17<sup>th</sup> December while another afridi scout was injured. Nullah Post was another hard hit post mostly by sniper fire.

## 2013

There w3as heacvy fog in January which made the operations bit difficult especially due to keeping direction . Arjali nadi came under attack in mid January which was beaten back, however Naik Hussain Ahemed Mohmand and Sepoy Aminullah Khattak of mahsud Scouts lost their lives along with two soldiers of 71 Punjab Regiment , eight soldiers were injured all from Mahsud Scouts.

In January 2013 command was changed and anded over to Colonel Naeem Sarwar who was already commanding the Khatak Scouts, a gunner officer who have been battalion commander in Pakistan Military Academy. Sting operations wre carried out as in past, however one mark change at present is the efforts of commandant to bring back the normalcy in the bara Valley. It is being achieved with aggressive verbal and physical bouts with the miscreants and simulatanosuly an effort is undrerway to win the heart and ionds of local population. Polio drop campaign resulted in over 18000 children being given the vaccination. On first two days 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> June it was carried out in Bar Kambar Khel and on 12<sup>th</sup> in Sepah area which is heart land of Mangal bagh, til 1200 hours not a single family came however commandant's message to Faqir Wali in the area changed the scenario. Most significant is the opening of Bara Canal. Reconaissance with irrigation department was carried out on 113<sup>th</sup> june, commandant himself went to see the spera Dam, on the way abck he adopted the Kuhi route which was closed since 2010. This small step will go a long way in establishing the writ of government and finishing no go areas in the agency.

**Operation Sheraz** was a 24-30 hours operation conducted from evening 9<sup>th</sup> February to mid night 10<sup>th</sup> February. A total of eight companies were employed (2x Companies ex 71 Punjab, AK Light Commando, company ex 35 AK, SOG-1, SOG-4 and two pooled companies ex MS / Swat Scout / Khyber Rifles / ISCR troops) during the operation. Aim was to Philologically dent miscreants through a targeted operation with deception, initially and thereafter. Latersanitize area from Gandao to Spera Dam (Western side) and Fort Jhansi- Spera Dam (Eastern Side).

On 24<sup>th</sup> February 2013 during "Operation Sheraz-2" . 1Wing was deployed in cordon near Nalla Post, during the operation Company Azad Kashmir Light Commando Battalian reported that there is shortage of ammunition with them and asked for immediate supply. Number 701790 **Havildar Shahid Ali Bangash** deployed in cordon near Nalla Post with Quick Reaction Force 1Wing, immediately loaded the ammunition in Armed Personnel Carrier vehicle and under heavy fire voluntarily rushed towards the site along with driver Number 704248 Sepoy Hanif Shah. On reaching the spot he realized

that the combat group which had to take the ammunition for company Azad Kashmir Light Commando Battalion did not reach the RV. He was out of communication with his Wing Commander so he rushed back for further orders. He was again sent back to the same RV, which he again did and successfully handed over the required ammunition to the company Azad Kashmir Light Commando Battalion. His unprecedented display of courage, valour, dedication and selfless attitude assisted the company Azad Kashmir Light Commando Battalion to engage the terrorists causing considerable damage both in terms of men and material.

Present. At present there is cessation of violence in the valley, an operation in undergoing to capture the heights of Tirah and maidan which were successfully accomplished on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2013. Bara Bazar once bustling with life gives the look of a ghost town, deserted and awful silence occasionally broken by jet aircraft flying over head.

## Mahsud Scouts Dance Party

Dance is a rhythmic representation of the culture, in pathan tribal culture dance is by itself a manifesto of militancy; yet none matches the ferocity and utter frivolity of soul carrying daggers and whirling around shaking their heads in accordance with the drum beats. Commissioner Karachi was witness and guest at one such event arranged in his honour in 1966 and he rewarded with Rupees two hundred to them. They have performed at President's House, at annual Horse and cattle show at Lahore and regular performers at Landi Kotal Khyber Rifles. Strength of party at Lahore would be over fifty headed by a junior commissioned officer. Band party of Mahsud Scouts was equally popular at all events. Bugler used to carry out the retreat and reveille. In August 1994 Khakroob Mamid Khan Mahsud died at Khyber Rifles Landi Kotal while carrying out rehearsal for the dance; he was member of dance party.

## CHAPTER II- KHYBER RIFLES

### Khyber & Rifles. A personal account

If ever there is one name in Frontier Warfare which is not bounded by language, time, race and is understood all over the world then very rightly it is Khyber Pass and Khyber Rifles. It is 2100 hours and I am sitting in the Michni Guestroom which is located on the upper storey of this 1960 era architecture {Deco} the original mess building which was constructed in 1900 is across the far end of the lawn it is now commandant's house. I came here in the morning from Peshawar with the Commandant Khyber Rifles Colonel Mansoor who has taken over a week ago, he was previously defence attaché at Uzbekistan. We started off at 0800 hours, I woke up at 0615 hours with great difficulty but managed to be in time, it is always good to start a venture on time. The driver with me Havildar Syed Ali Mahsud was a friendly person and we had a lively talk all through the way which took us over an hour due to under construction road being built by Frontier Works Organization{FWO}. The convoy comprised of five vehicles, one with me another with commandant and then two protection vehicles and then a

civilian car carrying commandant's family. We raced out of Peshawar mainly because it was Friday and secondly it was early in the morning.

Like all Pakistanis' I have been brought up watching the Gateway to Khyber on television and currency notes, but never saw it before, name like Jamrud, Ali Masjid, Torkham are part of military history. They all are on the route. We passed Hayatabad, entered into the Khyber Agency the very first shops are of opium and weapons I enquired from the havildar and he replied that well the business is as usual but at very low key. I have been a regular visitor here in 1992 but never had the opportunity , time or guts to travel ahead. In early 70s and even in 80s and 90s people used to visit Kabul on daily basis in early 60s the Pakistanis used to visit Kabul to watch Indian movies. Then came Jamrud fort which was built by the Sikh General Hari Singh Nalwa in 1836.

Khyber Rifles were raised as Khyber Jezailchis in November 1878-9 by the British expeditionary force stationed at Jalalabad, Captain Gais ford and Sardar Aslam Khan then a risaldar are the two major personalities involved in its raising. The convoluted history of raising is mainly due to the fact that events changed very rapidly in this short span of time. The British expeditionary force which had invaded the Afghanistan had opted to take routes one from Peiwar Kotal in Kurram , which lies adjacent to the Afridi homeland of Tirah height and Bara Valley, further south another force had gone towards the Kandahar from the ancient Bolan Pass. British after the ill fated campaign of 1842 had withdrew from the Afghanistan through the Khyber Pass and pas practically remained closed for another thirty years . As a preliminary to the second Afghan War the Khyber Pass was the key and as such a n early demonstration of power and diplomacy was required. Major Cavagnarri the British political officer designated for Kabul reached an agreement with the Khyber Afridi for a sum of Rupees 5959 per year .Khyber Rifles took birth as a result of treaty of Gandamak 1878 in which the Kabul agreed to relinquish its hereditary control over the pass and also agreed not to intervene with the Afridi clan; the tribe itself was neither informed and neither it cared what kind of agreement has been agreed upon. In September 1880 the British forces evacuated the Afghanistan and the very force of Afridi which comprised of native was the nucleus around which the present day Khyber Rifle takes its history.

It was in early 1881 that a full jirga of Afridi clan was held at Peshawar in which the independence of the tribe was recognized and allowances agreed {rupees 85,860 for the Khyber Afridi}, government to take the toll and clan to provide the force for marinating order and peace on the pass<sup>7</sup>. This force was Khyber Jezailchis which comprised of native Khyber Afridi and paid by the British. Khyber rifles initially had a strength of 400 footmen and 48 mounted on horse , later it increased to 550 in 1881, having one officer; Sardar Aslam Khan Saddozai, he in turn was under command of the political officer of Khyber Agency which for almost eighteen years was Colonel Warburton. Thus the first twenty years of Rifles history is a history of these two men who led, reorganize and expanded the Khyber Jezailchis. The natives used to

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<sup>7</sup> Colonel H.C.wylly from the Black Mounatin to Waziristan, first edition, 1912, reprint.Sang e Meel publishers , Lahoire, 2003, pp-184-185.



call it Sur Lakkai {red tail}<sup>8</sup> for the reason that the Jezailchis wore the native dress but as a mark of distinction they would put on a red cloth on their turban thus the nick name. In other words it was a levies because they were not issued with any government rifles and only free ration was admissible the pay being paid directly to the clans under silladari system.

The very first operation in which this outfit was employed was in Bazar area {Zakkha Khel} and they did well. The role of them was more of a scout leading the way for the British regular army units and keeping the pass open mostly from their own clans. In 1890 the government in recognition of their service and as a mark of trust started issuing them the official rifles

Khyber Rifles take their origin to the second Afghan War of 1879 when they were raised as Khyber Jazailchis with Major Nawab Aslam Khan as the first commandant. Khyber Pass itself came into limelight due to 1<sup>st</sup> Afghan War of 1839. The British East Indian troops did not march through it rather they opted for the Kandahar {Bolan Pass} but their retreat and relief was through Khyber Pass and that is how Khyber Pass and Khyber Rifles became synonym .

### **Khyber Rifles**

Khyber Rifles {KR} has the oldest and one of the most chequered history among all the corps of Frontier Corps {FC}. They are the oldest component of FC, raised in 1879 as an irregular tribal force comprising of some 300 odd Afridi tribesmen with a single aim to keep the historic pass open year around and to ensure the safe passage of caravans and more importantly the British army for its subsequent operations against Afghanistan. When the occasion arrived in 1919 with the start of Third Afghan War the soldiers deserted en masse resulting in the disbandment of the corps. It was raised again in 1941 as Afridi Battalion and took part in the war mainly carrying out protective duties in the rear. It was again disbanded in 1946 at Sialkot and Khyber Rifles were re-raised at the same station and stationed at their home town of Landi Kotal where they are present till now. It took part in the 1965 Pakistan-India war and was awarded a Sitara-e-Jurat, it had its share of action in the 1971 Pakistan-India war mainly on eastern front. Till the start of war against terror in 2001 it was mainly occupied in keeping peace on the border and quelling the odd miscreant in the agency; which had gained notoriety in drugs all over the world. However since 2005 when FC came under operational control of army the KR have been busy all over the tribal areas in hunting the terrorists in collaboration with other corps and army. In the process no less than sixty scouts have embraced shahadat and over two hundred have been injured.

Khyber Rifle's main fame is in its holding and guarding the historic pass Khyber, and being a host to a galaxy of native and foreign dignitaries who visit the pass they range from field marshalls, emperors, crown princes, queens, generals, admirals, sportsmen, actors, clergy, writers , premiers, presidents, air marshalls, politicians to name few.

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<sup>8</sup> Colonel sir George Warburton, eighteen years in the Khyber 1879-1898, first published 1900, reprint, Sang e meel, 2007, p-94.

Khyber Pass is the most natural way of movement between the Kabul-Peshawar-Lahore-Delhi and onwards to Calcutta in east and towards the central Asia on west. Pass itself starts almost ten miles west of Peshawar with Jamrud as the base town and then gradual climb with a swindling track {presently FWO is constructing road which is built till Ali Masjid}. Population is thin on both sides of road, barren void of water and generally dry. The present day road journey despite the under construction road does not take more than an hour. The ever present long Mercedes trailers coming from Kabul carrying goods and military hardware of NATO, non custom paid vehicles, and many other vehicles keep it busy from sunrise to sunset. One obvious absence is that of motorcycles, I did not see even a single motor cycle in today's journey and neither I saw any one carrying weapons. It is hard to believe that it is the same notorious Khyber Pass. Presence of women is a very handy yardstick to measure the civilization held in the agency, they are rare sight in Upper Tochi Valley, here in Khyber they are obvious, I saw many of them waiting for the public transport sitting beside the road, I saw them moving in flock carrying water buckets, sitting in vans and so on yet all were covered in chaddar and not in shuttle cock burqa. That was heartening for me as these signs are evidence of pacification of people in the agency.

The famous railway line which was once termed as impossible to construct and which took decades of paper work and was finally made operational in 1922 is now in ruins, at places it is shredded and tottering in pieces.

Since 1836 when the Sikhs were defeated at Ali Masjid till now the landmarks all along the track have hardly altered with the exception of two, one the house or killa of Haji Ayub Afridi who was once rated as the most honest and hospitable drug smuggler of his time, he also had the distinction of firing a shot at Nehru during his speech at Peshawar in 1946; Ayub was a khassadar then. Other is the Miri Mosque where a blast in 2009 killed over 92 tribesmen, mosque has been built new. The other landmark is Ali Masjid, the tradition goes that Hazrat Ali came here and built a mosque, opposite the mosque is a huge boulder believed to be thrown by Hazrat Ali; yet the population is entirely composed of Sunni faith.

I arrived at Landi Kotal after an hour of historic drive to enter into Khyber Rifles Mess another historic landmark, I have read and heard so much about it that I felt as if I have been here before, a large mess with open green lawn a rare sight here, it is double storied and decorated in style. The gallery of the mess is the most talk about in the world because no where else one finds such luminaries like Carter, Nixon, Thatcher, Raza Shah, Robert de Niro, Mahattir, King Hussein, Queen Elizabeth, Diana, Sachin Tendulkar, Quaid e Azam, to name few who have visited and presented their autograph photographs and shields. The variety of shields are a subject in themselves. Wooden, brass, plastic, crystal, paper, cloth, etching, engraving, and all that has been possible are here; these shields are from almost every country including North Korea, Zimbabwe, Jordan, Abu Dhabi, Glasgow Police, Defence Intelligence Agency, Canadian Mounted Police, Australian parliament, Swiss armed forces, France, Portugal and even India. Probably the only mess in Pakistan where the shields presented by Indian defence attaches are placed prominently. It is a who is who of Pakistan military, General Zia Ul Haq { he served in Khyber Rifles as major in 1954 } Generals Abdul Waheed Kakkar, Musharraf, and Field Marshall Ayub Khan have graced this mess. These shields are an insight

into the country's culture there are some who have taken the pain to engrave the presented to Khyber Rifles and others have simply presented by so and so. Many of the shields have lost their colour and shine and the insignias itself have lost their shape and even the screws have become loose. All in all over 1200 such shields adorn the long wall and two rooms of the mess. There are walls dedicated to single country, USA, UK are the leading visitors followed by Turkey. There are rare souvenirs also like the autographed bats of English and Indian cricket teams, the legend like Sachin Tendulkar is there smiling at Torkham Post so is Diana.

Outside is a tree which is in chains because a drunk British officer felt it moving one night in 1913 and ordered it to be chained and it is still chained, the new heritage complex which I have not seen today. Mess havildar took me out for a walk and we first went to the mess staff living quarters where I saw the dhobi ironing and talking on mobile simultaneously. The camp is huge, previously it had an outer mud wall as late as 1940 but it is no more there. The water supply comes from Torkham through a pipe and is stored at Mirza piquet which is located on the northern side at a mile distance.

In the evening had a cup of tea in the mess lawn and enjoyed the company of two officers both Major Major Raza and other I am forgetting his name. There was a lady get together at the mess and thus we also had the opportunity to enjoy the chicken, noodles and dehi balay followed by cup of tea. Talk range from importance of sports in army to the disadvantages of mobile phone. Issue of my own menu was also discussed and finally they agree to chalk it out themselves. In all the Frontier Corps messes there is no set menu rather it is what you would like to eat. I normally avoid meat in such circumstances where I don't have to pay the bill because it looks odd to order an expensive meal; I also avoid using transport in such matters thus we chalked out a plan where I was given the freedom to walk around. Later I came to my room.

My room is spacious, large and huge just like a seventies film of Muhammad Ali, it is designed in a manner which creates nostalgia, I do not use air conditioner also when it is free. Later the commandant came for a courtesy call. He is from 25 Cavalry and has been a defence attaché in Uzbekistan for three years thus I had many questions to ask, how is the weather, how is economy, law and order, people, their religious affiliations and above all their ferocity. Colonel Mansoor gave ample and satisfying replies. In nutshell Uzbekistan is an autocratic society where 90% population is Muslims yet religion is discouraged, none is allowed to have prayer room in any factory or office, strict intelligence, almost one intelligence person on every three persons. No foreigner can move out of city without getting himself registered with police even locals also have to abide by these conditions. No one is allowed to keep weapon, eight years in jail for keeping one bullet. People are conservative wearing long dresses and no shorts in Ferghana Valley. Tashkent and Samarkand are the two most open cities with night life, no café can be opened unless it serves alcohol. Law and security is very strict and even a nude girl can walk safely back to her apartment at night. Parallel economy of corruption is there; by and large Uzbeks are stiff neck people. Amu Darya is the main river, country is plain in nature with fifth largest cotton growing country. Fruits are proverbial in taste especially the watermelons, Tamerlane is the national hero and his statues are everywhere, one president is in power since 1991.

And sure I thought about you all the way from Peshawar to Landi Kotal, now it is warm here in the room , so good nite.

## **Day Two.**

Got up late because all night sleep was far away, excitement, nostalgia and above all fear of unknown. Anyway the first issue was the shower, it is modern gadget and despite all my efforts I failed to understand its function thus filled a bucket with tap water and took a shower and made a mental note to find its operation from the sweeper. Had a cup of tea and a toast in breakfast and then moved down had a round of cultural building, a sheer wastage of money but then keeping in view the number of foreign delegation may be it is required but nothing extraordinary perhaps it looks to me that way. Sat in lawn just staring at the far end , a lush green lawn with birds running around, there are a dosen cranes here and they all move together. A fat cock was running after the hens too.

Day was warm and it was pleasant to sit in shade. The vehicle came to my disappointment driver was a Mullagori tribe but he picked three more escort guards including Subedar Sana Khattak and we moved out towards the first destination a water reservoir piquet.

Drive was interesting, it was school closing time and students all male were wearing blue shalwar kameez instead of militia colour, quite a number of trucks { 14000-17000 vehicles move daily across this border}. I saw a local grave yard the way it is different from normal is in the afct that natives erecta large flat stone at times two on grave thus it gives an odd but not frightening picture, there are many graveyards and they are nestled in between the houses. Shops were open and people moving in normal manner none was carrying any weapons, driver informed me that now it is forbidden and only those are allowed to carry arms who have any vendetta around them. Passing through the mud habitat having a paved road we headed towards the piquet which is at a higher elevation having barbed wire all around it, a deserted pond in front. The guard commander Havildar Sadiq Yousafzai welcomed me and in Pashtu told a sepoy to fetch a cold drink but I do understand the language now thus I asked for only a glass of local water which he reluctantly brought. View is good, all around I saw mud and plaster houses and I was informed that this area belongs to Shinwari tribe and they have three sub clans who live here apart from Afghans. The house are at low level thus I could see what is going on inside, woman cooking , children running but overall void of life. In Waziristan it could have sparked a war had this kind of piquet been there as it happened in 2011 but here piquet is old and houses are new thus morally the militia has an upper hand. By this time I was convinced that area is peaceful in nature.

Went inside the piquet , it has cemented staircase for entrance otherwise all around a solid block of bricks, only four men were inside, they had two charpoys outside as well with a radio. Electricity is only for an hour everyday, cooking is done by the piquet with fresh ration

coming daily, I saw a goat moving around and recalled the standing orders of Tochi Scouts of 1922 which forbids goats at piquet mainly for bestiality.

British established the present camp in 1899 and by 1910 had constructed the piquet covering all sides of the camp at higher elevation. All in all there are four such piquets and post, the difference between post and piquet is in size, post have more capacity of troops. After an hour we move back. The deserted water reservoir was once brimmed with water and source of life, water is scarce here, I did not realized it in mess but here life revolves around water. The source is at ten miles away near the Pak-Afghan border .

Return journey was more comfortable and knowledgeable, saw a shop having the name Israel sabzi shop, not much of people on road, saw sign posting of lady doctors clinics, coaching centres, petrol pumps and so on. We move from east towards the northern side towards a piquet known as Mirza Post, the driver temporarily lost the way and while we were reversing I saw two women walking and they tried to cover their face when they saw us but there was no urgency in them. Mirza post is not the original name but I will trace it soon. The post looks magnificent work of defence , it dominates the area, it is on higher elevation , much bigger in size can hold over 100 soldiers for a fortnight, absolutely covered with only firing slits visible like poke marks on a cheese slab. The post commander initially took me around this solid block of stone. The Shinwari tribe is the neighbor at low elevation. There are no stair cases rather a iron ladder which can be pulled up too. Inside I came to know that it has three tiers, the lowest level then the one which I climbed and another one at upper which can be reached through a wooden broad staircase with steep angle. At the top one half of roof is covered and other half is open to let the sun rays come in. At all corners at all tiers less the base are solid iron protruding boxes with firing slits, I later climbed to the roof as well which is connected with a bamboo ladder it is difficult to climb. The view from top vibrantly a refreshing one , one can see all around, the road junction, the camp, the village around, the communication towers at far mountains. Later I came down and accepted the offer of green tea 'Shilmanni' it is a local specialty , the herb is found in Shilmani tribe area. The post commander further increased my knowledge of how to make the green tea, first boil the water, then add sugar and then few herbs of Shilman. The cost of herb is at present about 400 Rupees per kilogram.

Down below is the water reservoir with two colours on the roof, one is meant for local population and other for the militia, the reservoir is divided from inside with a wall. We went down to the basement also and appreciated the construction and design of post. It is mud brick from inside outside the stones have been used, floor are made of wood so is the roof with steel girders in between, I tried to find out the company who made it, normally TATA were the main suppliers of iron, there girders have been used at Thal Fort also but I could not find the name of manufacturer. There is very little electricity no connection from camp, water for post also comes on a bowser and on my inquiry that why don't you use electric motor to suck water the answer was vague in nature. One good thing about soldiers of FC is that they do not crib against the superiors. Post commander was hopeful that he will get it done once the new commandant comes here on his visit. The water bowser cost locals around Rupees fifty which is quite heavy on them. I pondered over the fact that in last thirteen years no such piquet or post has been constructed by army or FC, strange but it is true that many post like Isha have been repeatedly

targeted by terrorist but they were never constructed on such quality. Thus the losses in war are not unavoidable rather the inefficiency of military is also responsible for them. The post meant to have hundred troops had only six, they cook at their own , there was no sweeper at the post, the cooking area was dirty and over all post needs a patron , regular visits of officers especially commandant are must. This post is in original condition as they have not constructed a cement stairs for ease.

Drive back , driver asked me whether I would like to see the Landi Kotal bazaar, I agreed if it is in rules and protection is sufficient, he smiled and said the area is peaceful. We drove into bazaar, on the way I saw militia giving route protection , on inquiry I was informed that they are for the safety of NATO containers, I noticed the absence of khassadars{tribal police} and driver guessed that may be it is Saturday and they are on holidays, but I did noticed them while we were coming towards the post. Bazaar all belongs to Shinwari. Taxis, shops of all kind less arms or they were not visible, petrol pump, publicity hoardings of mobile companies, hotels, fruit shops , one odd bakery, no beggars and no music in air. It looks too peaceful and commercial, more like Dir. Saw the old railway station and railway colony, the train service has been terminated after the floods of 2005 which swept away the tracks near Ali Masjid.

Later had a drive around the camp, saw a group of women and children most unusual sign and driver promptly told me that they are Christians mostly sweepers , in Tochi even these dare not venture out in such outfits. Paid a homage to the martyrs monument of 7 Division, there is a brigade of army here as well but at the moment all its battalions less one is on deployment in different parts of the area. It is again unusual for a militia to have a regular army unit living beside it. The camp does not have a solid wall what they have cannot be called an effective wall. This is why I mentioned earlier that cultural heritage building is wastage of money; wall is more important. Only Mahsud scouts have constructed a wall in these years, Colonel Janjua stands out among all commandants of Frontier Corps for his this deed . I talked about him with driver and he also agreed about Colonel Janjua because he had been at Fort Salop.

In the evening there was a dinner for a visiting officer , there was a lunch for another senior officer , I was invited but I tactfully avoided it but now I had the meal, a lavish one but settled for the platter and then nap of an hour. In the evening when I had a look at the mess lawn I saw sofas and tables with lights , surely a party but why and for whom , I soon found out that it for visiting brigadier of engineers, I was invited and I accepted it. The dance party or cultural troupe of frontier Corps ahs performed at White house also. Major General Ghayoor has mentioned about the Mahsud dance party and their unique style of dance. They all have long hair, fancy dresses and when they started off it was thrilling, each tribes dance party acme one at a time, Mahsud were the first , comprising of thirty odd scouts, all having long hair. Mahsud dance is certainly very manly, the beat is heavy and no feminine e shrilling voice or music of flute just drums and they move their heads as if they are going for a war, all of a sudden one dancer starts whirling around the lawn in a circle at a breath taking speed. Mohmand were the next they had a flute, then Chitralis, they are soft in nature their dance is

more like two peacocks having a date, it is flute oriented. In the end the Khattak with their swords thrilled the ten odd guests including myself and four hosts.

I met the old mess waiter Gul Anar he has been serving the mess for last forty five years now his son Owais is also working in the mess, another cook Aarsal { I think } had died last year he served Khyber rifles for well over sixty years.

Dinner in the open, mostly Bar BQ , fruit salad, rice, mutton, fish, qorma{ I avoided it } conversation ranging mostly about education, Aitcheson College, university and so on. Later a good ice cream{not hand made} followed by green tea and another hour of military gossips in which I was the silent occupant. The lights went out for ten minutes and in this I saw the moon which was veiled between the leaves of high tall pine trees, what a view.

#### **Day Four. Torkham**

I had no intention or plan of going anywhere today, I slept with an vow to get up early thus to join the Rifles in their daily chores. I was able to manage that and started typing the data, then came the Hasan Kuki Khel Afridi to my room , he is a young lad who is the photographer of the Rifles. I had given him the History of Tochi scouts book to show around the scouts in order to tell them and motivate them to have good photographs; mission as accomplished as Hasan told me that he has taken few pictures of the medical platoon. The good news was that commandant has gone to Peshawar, although Colonel Mansoor is an excellent officer yet the aura of Commandant is very forceful and I naturally felt bit relax.

After shower I went down, oh, I had a cup of tea and single toast in breakfast. At lawn I met the mess havildar and I took his picture he requested that he wants his picture to be taken with the sun dial , I did as he desired. I walked towards the office block which is in fact just across the western wall of the mess separated by an iron old red gate. From the design pattern it looks that initially only the walled compound was there and this mess building acme up later probably in post 1945 era. Saw scouts working on an house which happens to DQ's house. In the office area I met the adjutant Major Naveed , a good mannered officer and soon it revealed that he is from Air Defence 142 Gun Missile Regiment. Now this unit is known as 'Karma Wali' and it was raised by Lt Col Ilyas who was my commanding officer also. Thus all ice broken and we were comfortable, Colonel Mansoor had already given the instructions to all that all possible help is to be extended; so different from Chitral where commandant had no time for me even for a courtesy call. We talked about Colonel Ilyas , his son is now commissioned in same regiment. Major Naveed gave me a briefing on map explaining the deployment and the operations conducted so far.

Names like Lalpura and Dakka are so familiar to my eyes and mind, I am keen to see the northern end of this ridge line where it debouches into the River Kabul some twenty miles from Landi Kotal towards north. My anxiety and apprehension is as to know whether the river banks can afford caravan movement , it seems affirmative but I still want to see it myself. If it

is true then the question arises that why should anyone use this curving , hard , barren and ferocious route of Khyber Pass why not the easy path of following River Kabul, but it will take time. Major Naveed further enhanced my interest by offering me to go to Tirah Valley the heart of Afridi, it takes three hours and route is absolute safe. Four months ago it was not the case and all troops had to be sustained by helicopters. Initially an army brigade was deployed there but it was pulled out in 2009 and Managl Bagh then established himself. Thus an operation was conducted in which Major Naveed also took part to clear them. On the very first day 3 Commando Battalion suffered over a dozen casualties same was the fate of 8 Punjab Regiment but valiantly they cleared the area and established the writ of state there. Zakkha Khel a sub clan of Afridi played an important role in it. They had a fall out with Managl Bagh and thus joined the state's forces { Mizh Mahsud visit notes}. Zakkha Khel was never the favored clan of government since last one hundred years and they were not even enrolled in Khyber rifles but things have changed now. Zakkha Khel now man the piquets en route and it is safe. In the conversation he asked me whether I would like to go to Chahar Bagh, I was stunned at this offer, Chahr Bagh another historical place, furthermore he informed me that I can also see Michni and Torkham in the same trip as both are controlled by the No.5 Wing located at Chahar Bagh, I grabbed the offer and he ordered the vehicle and escort to be ready.

We talked about regimental history, soon Major Raza also joins in , he was still keen on my yesterday's point about the lone Sitara-e- Jurat of Khyber Rifles and sheer absence of his name anywhere in Khyber Rifles area. The irony with Khyber Rifles is that all their attention is focused on the Officer Mess and the flow of foreign dignitaries thus other aspects are bound to be over looked.

Yesterday I had a walk in the evening with the commandants orderly and went around the complete area, it becomes obvious when you see artillery shells lying under an open shed, one single rocket can cause a catastrophic end results, the neglected garden in front of the regimental hospital where in good time a fountain was also installed but now the grass is uncut and in shabby conditions, the pathetic looking graveyard in the western corner which I was very interested to have a look, I saw only one grave with an epitaph that was a major's daughter who died in 1979 age just three months old. I also had round of the canteen and canteen contractor is quite old, canteen was neat and clean.

Anyway coming back to the main topic, we moved out at 1200 hours and sped past the town , I had the Hassan photographer with me and he proved to be of great assistance. The Pass starts descending and we after ten minutes reached a cross junction from where we took a right turn for Chahar Bagh. Being in Militia vehicle with guard gives you immense advantage, you can take shortcuts of the area, you are not stuck in any traffic jam , which occurs due to heavy long vehicles movement going and coming from Torkham. There are two lanes on the pass now, one is used by the trucks and other for light vehicles, even Landi Kotal has a by pass. The No.5 Wing deployed at Chahar Bagh is being commanded by Lt Col Mushtaq of 36 FF. The road to Chahar Bagh is narrow but in good condition, I saw school boys wearing orange colour uniform which is very obvious , it seems that militia colour is not worn here in schools, other reason is that they are studying in private school that is why other day I saw students in light blue colour uniform. I saw even girls going to school which is very unusual but by now I have a conviction



that Landi Kotal is much more liberal than any other Pathan town astride Durand Line, other logic is that they all belong to Shinwari Tribe which by these proofs seem to be liberal.

Chahr Bagh is a Persian word meaning Four Gardens, it is situated few miles towards west of Landi Kotal camp on the road leading to the Torkham. At Michni the diversion takes place towards Chahrbagh. It took us not more than half an hour in a jeep to reach CharBagh from camp.

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**Chahr bagh** is the most fertile area, in fact it supplies water to the Landi Kotal as well. I saw a field of corn , the very first such field in days, air pleasant, scenery refreshing with fear lifting with every second and confidence level rising no more fear of IEDs or ambush. After another ten minutes drive we were at Chahr Bagh , a fort constructed in 1926, a solid piece of stone with a small gate which hardly allows a small vehicle to pass through, inside a small courtyard with double storied building . The wing commander was there receiving me, i developed a liking for him from the first moment .He took me upstairs , wooden stairs , yellow and red colour used freely, it is the wing colour. There was no electricity but it was pleasant. I knew from Major Naveed that Lt Col Mushtaq is preparing for his master's exam in international affairs with paper due tomorrow, I noticed the red stripe on his right chest which indicates serious injury sustained in an operations. It certainly demands respect and I was not lacking in this manner. Our conversation was polite mostly on studies and general pattern of life. I inquired about him regarding the area, culture, environments. Lt Col Mushtaq happens to be student and later unit officer of my course mate Brigadier Naveed Safdar.

Area is peaceful with Shinwari tribe in majority, no crimes in the area, main issue is the responsibility of Torkham border checkpoint for which Mushtaq is wholly responsible certainly with commandant looking upon. He quoted an interesting incident where the Afghan national army {ANA} beaten the sweeper of the wing on which Mushtaq demanded an apology which was refused by the Afghans and in retaliation he{Mushtaq} just closed the border. The closing of border is an international issue but commandant stood behind Mushtaq and after a day the Afghans did offered an apology, in another incident over twenty Pakistanis were beaten by the Afghans inside their territory even when they showed their passport, Afghans simply torn these and threw in river and telling them 'to find them back at Attock'. Again border was closed and it resulted in a flag meeting after three days , with an apology the border was open again. I asked him about how jirga is convened and how it is conducted. His reply was that basically the maliks who are nominated by the political agent with as many four or five in one village, if anything of interest or grievance take place then the maliks do send message, Mushtaq understands their financial aspect as in his words ' not many maliks can even afford

the fare to come to his headquarters' thus he goes around, in other cases it can be a convening order from his side also. In the jirga almost all maliks attend along with anyone else who wants to be there, normally they sit on ground with hand woven carpet laid along with cushions, or if they come to his office than chairs are offered. Normally either the elder malik stars proceeding or Mushtaq himself will open up highlighting the reason for the jirga. In one instance the complaint was from Shilman tribe as they have been suffering from the ban on the sale of fertilizers as they were being used in explosives also. Mushtaq resolved the matter by offering them one bag per farmer provided he brings a affidavit from the malik that this will not be used for any miscreant purpose. Mushtaq highlighted his point by stating that despite the break down of railway the tracks are still intact and not stolen because of these high moral grounds of keeping the words. Mushtaq had nothing but contempt for the Afghans his words or feelings are the same which British also had regarding these Afghans in their time, thieves, liars and so on. I think majority of the traits attributed negatively about Afridi are in fact due to Afghans character and doing.

Meanwhile he informed me and requested to put on the ranks of promotion to two newly scouts, one havildar to naib subedar and other getting second pip . I was really thrilled and honoured but politely declined his offer, he told me that it is ok as far as the tradition goes because in many cases the relatives of the promoted scouts come and put on the ranks. I recalled that in Tochi one of the malik was putting on captains' rank to an officer therefore in nodded in approval. Naik Hassan Kuki Khel meanwhile was busy in taking the pictures , tea break was ordered but it was taking time. I do not want to waste his time thus I really had to put my foot down that Mushtaq will not accompany me to the Torkham border and he will study ; he reluctantly agreed. While they were busy in group photograph which took place down stairs at the flag hoisting area which was where our vehicles were parked; I had a round of the roof taking pictures and having an orientation of the fort and the area.

Tea break came in layers , all kind of meat dishes, mutton tikka , mutton chops, chicken, kebabs, chips, and so on. Then we move down and in an garceful ceremony put on the ranks turn by turn to the two scouts. It is certainly a great honour for me and a mile stone in the life of these, I could feel that Mushtaq is particularly not happy with naib subedar promotion and told him so that it is because of my presence that he is getting ranks otherwise he might have to wait for another week. There were no less than a dozen garlands wrapped around havildar ... and only one was put around the naib subedar. We bid adieu to him, Lt Col Mushtaq had already passed the instructions at Michni for my reception. We adopted the same route and soon join the main road. After another few minutes of drive we were at Michni Post.

**Michni post** without any debate is the most famous post in the world { Check point Charlie came up much much later}, it is historical in a sense that it was constructed back in 1900, renovated many times the last one taking place in 2012, and every head of state who visits Pakistan is invariably brought here, delegations comes from all over world to feel the romance of Frontier. It is an old piquet which has been renovated with new outer look. The subedar in charge tried to take me to the briefing room which has a glass front panel with directions . I smilingly told him about the purpose of my visit and thee fore we all walk inside the piquet. . It is similar in size and design to Mirza Piquet or for that matter with any other

piquet in Frontier of that era. The piquet constructed at that time falls into two broad categories in terms of capacity and size. This Michni Post falls into lesser category , inside wooden floor, thick walls, white in colour, feeble sun light, wooden stairs leading to upper deck. It was as if I am in my own regiment and not a visitor. The scouts were definitely having relaxed time , wearing their casual dress but I put them at ease and climbed up with these two host and Hassan. View from top was good, one can see all around. On the western side the Torkham was visible through a haze and cloud of mild dust kicked by the trucks. The pass in fact takes a turn here{pass has over 150 turns}, down below me was a khassadar check post, every truck is stopped here and money is taken by khassadar. It should not be taken as bribe rather these khassadar here comprised of three tribes, Shinwari, Shilmani, Afridi and even Mullagori. There is no toll tax on Khyber Pass, one can leave his vehicle for even a week on any part of the pass and it will remain safe that is the duty of khassadar to keep peace in the area. Thus the money which they take from the trucks finances their own existence but more important it helps the tribe to build its financial resources which comes handy when a tribe has to pay a collective fine. I am reading about them, watching them in almost all part of the frontier and not even once in year and half of travelling I have found them ineffective or lacking courtesy. The windows of the Frontier Corps vehicles have dark shades even then a khassadar knows that an officer is travelling and he always invariably waves hand in respect or salute.

**Tamerlane's Prison**, a historian fallacy, in front of Michni Post down in the small gorge and up on a small hillock are two walls and a structure which has been termed as Tamerlane's prison dating back to 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, before seeing it I was also of the same opinion and thought of seeing it once, however after seeing it I am of the firm opinion that it is a historical fallacy, it is too new in construction and above all why should Tamerlane requires a prison , he was not of the type and temperament to have such kind of institutions. The building would have taken at least half a year to construct and by this time Tamerlane was out of India after massacring one hundred thousand Hindus in one night as per his own autobiography so why should he requires . Furthermore there is no other building of same design or pattern attributed to him, logically one should find more of them at least at Landi Kotal but there are none. I am now questioning all that has been written about frontier after this. One key issue is that no one has come here for a duration to stay majority comes and leaves after an hour { I did the same} thus lot of common folk has become authentic part of history. It was not Tamerlane rather Prince Timur son of Shah Shuja the king of Afghanistan who was deposed and it was in 1839 that he was escorted by Captain Wade of British raj to Kabul.

Another plaque at Michni Post highlights the fact that Doctor Brydon walked into this post in January 1842 which again is a wrong perception because Brydon had walked into the Jalalabad garrison where Lady Sale later capture the scene in her painting the most painting about the frontier till to date.

We left the Michni, waved to the khassadars and move towards the Torkham, the road here really is nothing more than a track of dust, the mountain itself are soft and there was a cloud of dust kicked by heavy trucks but driver drove fearlessly, everyone leaves the way for the militia vehicle. On the left down below the scenery is different with green oasis with little trickle of water with the prison structure on the ridge that divides the water channel. Another

few turns and we were on the plain ground heading for Torkham , one has heard of fish market but here it is truck market, all around heavy trucks with occasional sedans, on my inquiry that these have regular number plates I was informed that these are private taxis which ply between the Torkham and Peshawar. Reason for my inquisitiveness was the occasional glimpse of women inside the cars with partial veil; mystery was solved at Torkham.

## Torkham

The road opens up soon and there was a traffic jam mainly due to trucks yet the khassadars kept some kind of discipline better than many traffic warden of many cities. These khassadar just cleared the road for us, there is a taxi stand, some shops, custom post..typical border post, people must walking , rush, noise, heat, dust, air conditioner was on in the vehicle , it also had a tinted shade but I do wave at the khassadar which they very fondly replied, the NATO vehicles onboard a trailer was too close to our small vehicle but we managed and finally entered the compound of our own.

Very unusual arrangement here at border, our complex is open, neat, well organized and well maintained, a monument without any inscription stood in centre with well painted slogans on all sides. The layout is that originally the Durand Line was straight at least here, it is a kind of narrow pass, with high ridge on south who has a water shed in the centre and that is the dividing line, however on ground the border has changed since Durand. In 1962 probably Pakistan & Afghanistan made a barter of land, Pakistan got area a mile inside Afghanistan at Torkham and Afghanistan got one post near Arandu in Chitral. Here on Afghan side there is no water and it is given by Pakistan, the Pakistani post at Torkham which now protrudes into Afghanistan is known as Ayub post after FM Ayub Khan the president of Pakistan at that time. It is so unusual, from our compound a stair leads towards the west around the compound, with an iron grill around it, as you climb up the stairs the area on left is all Afghanistan, thus the zero line remains there and yet you are moving into the afghan territory in a curved manner and after a kilometre the Ayub Post is reached which is perched at the end of the ridge, I did not went to the post but appreciated the efforts of our leaders who got it. I had a full view of the afghan territory, a board showing Karzai, Daud and Zahir Shah was there, a well painted fort was also visible, a flag of Afghanistan was fluttering. It is crowdy.

Border itself is nothing more than a chain which is raised at 2000 hours and down at 0600, the Afghan national Army troops wearing fatigue were manning there side, for pedestrians there is a side walk and everyone is checked by them and so is the case on our side where Khyber rifles do the same. I did not saw any lady police to search the women they are generally allowed to pass by with just a visual scan. There are old trolleys pushed by hand with a capacity of two or three adults in it, it is being used as taxi for crossing of border for sick and women. Women coming from Afghanistan are generally more liberal in looks, I could see the eyes and faces, even one was not having any veil just a chaddar wrapped around her. There were two who were wearing shuttle cock burqa of light blue colour . There are professional women also who usually ply for smuggling but this is where the khassadar comes into force they exactly know who has what intention. I was taking pictures but I came to know that

afghans do not like their pictures being taken; everyone hates media. I was the odd man out with my dress but with FC I was giving the impression of an high official of Pakistan and it feels good. I sat with the khassadar , had a picture taken of them , and after some time we came back inside the compound. The habitat on the high ridge line is known as Killay and it has a history and story, General Zia have served in Khyber Rifles in 1954 , his handiwal a Shinwari approached him when Zia became president and asked for electricity for his village , Zia not only provided electricity but also extended the road uptill his village. The Afghan side does not even have electricity rather they are on solar power, we are getting electricity from Peshawar through grid stations at Jamrud.

Had a lunch, subedar gave me some grapes in a bag and then after few pictures and lively talk we headed back through the same haze of traffic. Lot of trucks were standing for their turn of custom clearance, there are many cafes , for accommodation there are no hotels rather there are holes or caves in the adjoin hills which almost touches outer periphery of the Torkham, they are cold in summer thus drivers wait here. People comes from Jalalabad which is seventy odd kilometers away, Kabul is further 250 kilometers thus many Afghans prefer to have work, medical at Peshawar rather than at Kabul, thus a majority of them travel in private taxis from Torkham to Peshawar. Return journey was again interesting taking pictures and observing the railway tracks. Torkham is not more than ten miles away from Landi Kotal . On reaching Landi Kotal we stopped briefly at Landi Kotal railway station, for taking pictures I remained inside the vehicle and Hassan did the work. Soon khassadars came in , this is their beauty they reach the spot in minutes and invited us to tea but we just had a hand shake. There is a huge, large medical complex under construction at Landi Kotal , opposite the railway tracks work was going on, I saw board of lady doctors displayed on road as well.

### **Day Five.**

Same pattern but today I spent the day in the offices, sat with adjutant Major Nauman, Major Raza had gone to Peshawar along with the photographer Hassan. I was sitting in the adjutant office when I observed outside a group of men , I initially thought that they are from Mahsud drama party but they turned out to be real. These wee Zakkha Khel tribesmen keeping long hair and wearing the Chitrالي cap a typical Taliban dress, adjutant went outside and had friendly talk with them , he ordered the tea bar to be opened for them and went to inform the commandant, I remain seated thee and soon all these Zakkha Khel entered the office, they wee taken back by my dress{trouser/safari shirt} and presence I rose and shook hands with them and they replied with little bewilderment. I know that they are feeling that I am an intelligence operator. I then left the office mainly because it had three chairs .

### **Day Six.**

Much ado nothing, went to office area, had cup of tea with adjutant and other officers , also had a chat with the subedar major, naib subedar Musa Khan Mehsud. Spent time in

intelligence section going through the maps, commandant is still in Jarobi. Had a call from the Hussain Kuki Khel he is taking the pictures there. In the evening saw cricket match, Pakistan won it comfortably. In the evening I was invited on a 'barra khanna', in honour of Naib Subedar Musa Khan, he is retiring I came to know almost at the end. I had a good chat with Musa talking about various headgears of tribes the colours of turbans, and so on. Musa was not wearing the Mehsud 's cap, I think even here the tribes are shy of wearing their own cultural dress but they certainly appreciate a talk on them. Oh yes since I had gone early there I had a round of station library, it was deserted but have good books, one good thing is that the local school students have regular periods here at library, otherwise I think it must have been years before any one drew a book. It is same here at Khyber Rifles too the mess library had no book issued in last four years and even the keys have been lost of shelves; they have to break the locks for me.

Dinner was ok, lot of mutton but not cooked properly, the issue with mutton or lamb is that it has to be served hot especially the lamb otherwise it is difficult to eat, I still remember Lt Col Tariq's bar b q at Tochi last eid it was the best I had in years, mainly because we all were sitting feet from the source and lamb fat is always good in winter. After dinner Lt Col Ijaz made a good speech in Urdu, a good speech is a rare thing, selection of words and so on. The issue with majority of Punjabi officers is their lack of appreciation for the tribal customs; I now believe that these junior commissioned officers should be treated with same courtesy in their mess as we do for officers. I can feel that these JCOs feel uncomfortable on any jokes cut in front of other qaums. Major Raza is a hard working and very courteous officer the most courteous one if I can add. The billiard room is undergoing renovation the experts have been brought from Peshawar for this purpose and they work till mid night so do i.

One joke which I would to add' Major General Fazl Ghafoor late, once was attending the darbar and on reaching the rostrum after the Moulvi has done the recitation, he asked the scouts present, can you hear me, 'meri awaz tu nahin phat rahi' and everyone replied in affirmative, and general replied 'magar Moulvi saab ki tu phatt rahi thi'.

Last night I went through the visitors book and found the remarks of very first two pilots of RAF who landed at Landi Kotal in 1918, then that of Young husband, Ross Keppel, Mountbatten and Mr Jinnah along with Liaqat Ali Khan. In another it was Bhutto, Fazl Ilahi Choudhary, Margret Thatcher but the best one is the page having President Zia's signature and that of a cadet GC Tariq of 64 long course on same page.

## 'Sur Lakki' The Khyber Rifles

Khyber Rifles take their origin to the second Afghan War of 1879 when they were raised as Khyber Jazailchis with Major Nawab Aslam Khan as the first commandant. Khyber Pass itself came into limelight due to 1<sup>st</sup> Afghan War of 1839. The British East Indian troops did not marched through it rather they opted for the Kandahar {Bolan Pass} but their retreat and relief was through Khyber Pass and that is how Khyber Pass and Khyber Rifles became synonym.

Khyber Pass is the most natural way of movement between the Kabul-Peshawar-Lahore-Delhi and onwards to Calcutta in east and towards the central Asia on west. Pass itself starts almost ten miles west of Peshawar with Jamrud as the base town and then gradual climb with a swindling track {presently FWO is constructing road which is built till Ali Masjid}. Population is thin on both sides of road, barren void of water and generally dry. The present day road journey despite the under construction road does not take more than an hour. The ever present long Mercedes trailers coming from Kabul carrying goods and military hardware of NATO, non custom paid vehicles, and many other vehicles keep it busy from sunrise to sunset.

Since 1836 when the Sikhs were defeated at Ali Masjid till now the landmarks all along the track have hardly altered with the exception of two, one the house or killa of Haji Ayub Afridi who was once rated as the most honest and hospitable drug smuggler of his time, he also had the distinction of firing a shot at Nehru during his speech at Peshawar in 1946; Ayub was a khassadar then. Other is the Miri Mosque where a blast in 2009 killed over 92 tribesmen, mosque has been built new. The other landmark is Ali Masjid, the tradition goes that Hazrat Ali came here and built a mosque, opposite the mosque is a huge boulder believed to be thrown by Hazrat Ali; yet the population is entirely composed of Sunni faith.

**Khyber Rifles** history dates back to second Afghan war {1878} when in the aftermath of the campaign the present day Khyber rifle was raised as an irregular Khyber Jezailchis {Jezail stands for local manufactured rifle}. Comprising of two companies in which one was composed of Malik Din Khel Afridi and other from Zakkha Khel. The Rifles itself draws its name from the famous pass and since its inception it has remained here thus the history of the Rifles is in fact the history of the pass, history of the tribes inhabiting it and the international relations between the British India and the Afghanistan as part of Great Game.

The Khyber pass has a history of its own and it is the most famous of all the passes that leads to Indus Valley from the highlands of Central Asia; it is the gateway to the India and present day Pakistan. In old time the word Indai was mainly used for the Indus Valley, Persians called it India, the natives called it as Sindhu {Sanskrit}. Indus valley was under the Persian control from 500 BC, it was one of the twenty satrapies of Darius and the Taxila was the most rich among all these, other being the present day Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Baluchistan, Kafiristan to name a few. There is no record of the past available in India when it is compared with other old civilization of Egypt and China. Rig Veda is an oral history which narrates the history of Aryans, who migrated from the highlands towards the plains as part of historical current, in search of better dwellings, they logically followed the water channels leading east which includes River Gilgit in the north north west followed by River Kabul, River Tochi and river Zhob all thus acting as passes. Apart from these water passes the other passes that connects the west-east are Mintaka, Broghul, Nawagai, Khyber, Tirah, Kurram to name a few, but none has attained the glamour, charisma, romance, importance and convulsion as Khyber gained. India's history in a sense starts with Herodotus's Historia in which he mentioned the social life pattern of Indus, but the fact is that he never came physically towards this part thus his all accounts are based upon secondary sources. There is always a watermark in the history and to great extent our history starts with the Alexander the Great's invasion of India in 323 BC for the reason that he brought along with him a batch of historians to record the events but

unfortunately nothing has even survived of that in true sense. It was Arrian who almost three hundred years after Alexander's death wrote the history of his sojourn in India{70AD} thus even Arrian account cannot be taken with full authenticity. India after Alexander's retreat was divided among his generals with three major centres of importance emerging namely the Kabul in West, Taxila in the centre and Magadha in the east on Ganges, other important towns like Multan in south on Chenab and Peshawar on Kabul river in north assumed greater importance due to the east-west movement; for the purpose of Khyber routes we are more concerned with area west of Indus thus Peshawar is the key town.

Islam took birth in 570 AD at Arabia and within a short span of time it changed the history of present day Iran, Afghanistan, central Asia and India. By 712 AD when Islamic forces were knocking on the doors of India, the first major onslaught came from south through the sea and land adjoining it in a easterly direction from Iran and after defeating the Hindu Raja close to the ancient town of Moenjodaro it halted at Multan. On the north the Islamic forces defeated the joint military joint of Turk and Chinese in 751 AD. Turk was a word which the Arabs used for all nomadic tribes of central Asia; with this battle the Chinese and Turk empires not only were crushed but they embraced Islam especially the Turks in immense numbers and that had a profound impact on the Khyber Pass and other tribes.

Tribes living astride the Hindu Kush are descendants of the same Aryan stock which migrated from the central Asia and many kept on moving towards the east of Indus and adopted agricultural life style and others preferred to live astride the river banks and passes. They all are invariably interlinked with each other in one way or the other, with minor difference of origin. The name Khyber thus has its history interlinked with the early days of Islam. Battle of Khyber near Medina is one of the most famous ghazwa of that era and Hazrat Khalid bin Walid stands out as the most coveted and successful general of Islam. The oral native history thus claims to have a direct link with these two names, they accepted Islam on the hands of Khalid bin Walid and that is how the name Khyber was adopted. In another such local oral history the famous Ali Masjid which is the narrowest part of the pass is named after the conqueror of Khyber of Medina Hazrat Ali, the mosque is named after him. On the other hand it is very much logical to assume that the Islam spread with the conversion of Turks into this area. No Islamic army came through this pass.

By the end of first millennium the area astride Indus as far as Kabul was in an anarchy with no single power having authority, Hindu Rajas were in control of Kabul, Peshawar, and Bannu rather the upper districts were under their sway. The tide turned when the Turks after embracing Islam established the Muslim state at Ghazna and soon they defeated the Hindu Rajas and when the Great Mahmood of Ghazna ascended the throne he practically reduced the whole of India as vassal state of Ghazna by carrying out no less than a dozen expeditions to destroy the idol worshipping centres of Somnath. It must be kept in mind that the majority of the troops of Mahmood came from the valleys adjoining the Ghazna in Tochi, Kurram, Zhob to name a few. Ghazna is south of Kabul or Khyber Pass thus Khyber remained in oblivion. An Islamic state was established in India with capital at Delhi under the Turk sultans; the real history of Khyber starts from now. For next three centuries the invaders like Chengiz Khan and Tamerlane passed through this range and pass and finally it was Babur of Ferghana who in 15<sup>th</sup>



century crossed the pass and established the Mughul rule in India. Babur and his descendants have one unique quality they all almost wrote autobiography and biography which sheds light on the history of this pass. Mughul rule had its roots in central Asia and thus the pass became important, many attempts were made to have it properly secured under its control but they all partially succeeded, insurgency and rebellions were faced by them and till the end of this empire in 18<sup>th</sup> century the tussle continued. It was Akbar the Great's engineer Qasim Khan who is attributed with constructing the road on Khyber which was fit enough for vehicular traffic in 1581.

From 1739 invasion of India was carried out by Persian Nadir Shah who naturally adopted the southern passes of Kandahar but decided to move westward after ravaging Delhi through the Khyber pass, he met stiff resistance in the pass and subsequent rule of Ahmed Shah Abdali the Kabul had its authority extended till the Sutlej River having Peshawar, Lahore, Kashmir and Multan under its control. From 1800 onwards till 1849 the Sikhs under Maharaja Ranjeet Singh created a Sikh empire in Lahore which expanded westward. It was at this critical juncture that the British interest in the Khyber Pass took birth.

British East India Company (BEIC) a commercial venture were initially content with the dominion in the east but the threat of Napoleon in 1800 onwards compelled them to plunge into the western affairs, treaty with Persians in 1805 and then the Russian invasion's fear forced them to have a puppet regime in Kabul and this is how the First Afghan War in 1838 started which was mainly to restore power to the loyal Shah Shuja of Kabul. They opted to have the forces march towards the south of Afghanistan from the southern most pass of India the Bolan. The expedition succeeded in its mission and a regency was established in Kabul but all hell broke loose in 1842 when the regency was attacked, burnt and almost all the members of British contingent were massacred with the sole exception of Dr Brydon who was able to drag himself into the Jelalabad garrison manned by British troops while coming back from Kabul; Khyber in true sense now became the life saving blood line for the British and Khyber Pass was the key. Before venturing into the history from this point onward it is pertinent to have a look at the Khyber pass geography and demography.

## **Khyber Pass**

Physically the pass has a length of 33 miles extending from Jamrud which is eight miles west of Peshawar having an elevation of 1900 feet, traversing westward through a gradual ascent amidst barren and rocky mountains in a continuous slow and gradual climb passing through Shagai which is at 3000 feet elevation and then the narrowest part of pass at Ali Masjid couple of miles west of Shagai, again opening up and reaching Landi Kotal which is at 3500 feet and the highest point of the pass it is a plateau and from here a descent starts which takes a traveler down to Michni and into Landi Khanna which marks the culmination point of the pass; eight miles west of Landi Kotal.

Khyber Pass is inhabited by one major and most populous tribe the Afridis from Jamrud till Landi Kotal, Landi Kotal is the home of Shinwaris another Pathan tribe which extends into

afghnaistan. Afridis are restricted into the east of pass. Two minor tribes Shillman and Mullagori are also living north of the pass. The Kabul River markds the northern boundaries of the pass.

Pass it self can be classified into three main portion from east the initial part from Jamrud – Shagai with Baghiari defile overlooking the entrance it is known as lower Khyber , from shagai-landi kotal is the central Khyber and then from landi kotal –Landi khanna as the lower Khyber.

Geographically the northern area between the Kabul river when it enters into the palins of Peshawar till the southern part where it joins river Indus near Attock is a large curve , just like a moon in its mid phase. The southe part known as the Kohat{presently Khushal Bridge}moving west and north ward it is inhabited by eight clans of afridis. The mid point of this curve or moon is the Tirah Valley which is green and have a elevation of 6000 feet. This curve encompasses the valley of Bara River which has its origin in Tirah and logically even Peshawar is part of the Afridi clan as it falls west of River Kabul; therefore the east-west movement has to pass through this moon and there are two major passes the tirah pass and Khyber Pass. Going through the pages of history one has recorded the countless invaders going t6hrough them, surprisingly there are no ancient ruins along the Kyber pass to validate this claim. At landi Kotal which is the plateau , logic demands to have the ancient or even Mughul era structures in the form of fort and garrison but surprisingly there is no such landmarks left by the past rulers which by itself negates the very concept of this pass being the artery of past. If Mughuls can constract fort at attock { } then sheer absence of such in the pass or even at the mouth of pass on both end is highly conspicuous and open to debate, which will continue to remain in focus for times to come. There is only one ancient ruin between ali Masjid and landi kotal of a Bhuddist Stuppa which is 25 feet in height and still have certain marks of ancient language , the myth is that it was built during the reign of asoka {310 -232 BC}but it has never been examined technically to have scientific evidence of its age, no ancient marks of civilization. One most logical answer is the absence of water on the western mouth of pass thus old caravans tend to follow the River Kabul to reach into Peshawar having water all along. Old historians and biographers have use a variety of words for the same pass thus it seems that when the word Khyber is used then it speaks of the aea between the Landi khanna – shilman on west and the ridge line from Jamrud-Shilman on the east.

Taking oral history as the yard stick the overall comlex of history changes and one hears of fierece battles conducted at almost every stone of the pass. Among all the old names the name Kafir Kot stands out, it is the ridge which primarily runs south of the pass overlooking it till the Torkham . Its peaks do have strands of p[ast, the name itself is linked with the Kafiristan , a province of afghnaistan in past now Nuristan but within Pakisatn's Chitral district a tribe still exists having Kafiristan and known as kafir.

The pass and Afridis have become synonym to easch other, Afridi is also an Aryan tribe, it have eight clans and among them following habitates Khyber and adjoining, Kuki Khel, Zakka Khel , Kambar Khel, Malik Din Khel, Sipah, Shalobar , Aka Khel. The other tribes of Khyber are Shinwari, Mullagori and Shilman but they are on the northern side and even among

tem only Shinwari are in great strength but still no match to Afridi. One thing in common among all of them is that they all are Muslims and practice Sunni fiqh.

## **Khyber Rifles**

Khyber Rifles {KR} has the oldest and one of the most chequered history among all the corps of Frontier Corps {FC}. They are the oldest component of FC, raised in 1879 as an irregular tribal force comprising of some 300 odd Afridi tribesmen with a single aim to keep the historic pass open year around and to ensure the safe passage of caravans and more importantly the British army for its subsequent operations against Afghanistan. When the occasion arrived in 1919 with the start of Third Afghan War the soldiers deserted en masse resulting in the disbandment of the corps. It was raised again in 1941 as Afridi Battalion and took part in the war mainly carrying out protective duties in the area. It was again disbanded in 1946 at Sialkot and Khyber Rifles were re-raised at the same station and stationed at their home town of Landi Kotal where they are present till now. It took part in the 1965 Pakistan-India war and was awarded a sitara-e-jurat, it had its share of action in the 1971 Pakistan-India war mainly on eastern front. Till the start of war against terror in 2001 it was mainly occupied in keeping peace on the border and quelling the odd miscreant in the agency; which had gained notoriety in drugs all over the world. However since 2005 when FC came under operational control of army the KR have been busy all over the tribal areas in hunting the terrorists in collaboration with other corps and army. In the process no less than sixty scouts have embraced shahadat and over two hundred have been injured.

Khyber Rifle's main fame is in its holding and guarding the historic pass Khyber, and being a host to a galaxy of native and foreign dignitaries who visit the pass they range from field marshalls, emperors, crown princes, queens, generals, admirals, sportsmen, actors, clergy, writers, premiers, presidents, air marshalls, politicians to name few. Other reason of such fame

It was in early 1881 that a full jirga of Afridi clan was held at Peshawar in which the independence of the tribes was recognized and allowances agreed {rupees 85,860 for the Khyber Afridis}, government to take the toll and clan to provide the force for maintaining order and peace on the pass<sup>9</sup>. This force was Khyber Jezailchi which comprised of native Khyber Afridis and paid by the British. Khyber rifles initially had a strength of 400 footmen and 48 mounted on horse, later it increased to 550 in 1881, having one officer; sardar Aslam Khan Saddozai, he in turn was under command of the political officer of Khyber rifles which for almost eighteen years was Colonel Warburton. Thus the first twenty years of Rifles history is a history of these two men who led, reorganized and expanded the Khyber Jezailchis. The natives used to call it Sur Lakkai {red tail}<sup>10</sup> for the reason that the Jezailchis wore the native dress but as a mark of distinction they would put on a red cloth on their turban thus the nickname. In other words

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<sup>9</sup> Colonel H.C. Wylie from the Black Mountain to Waziristan, first edition, 1912, reprint. Sang e Meel publishers, Lahore, 2003, pp-184-185.

<sup>10</sup> Colonel Sir George Warburton, eighteen years in the Khyber 1879-1898, first published 1900, reprint, Sang e Meel, 2007, p-94.

it was a levies because they were not issued with any government rifles and only free action was admissible the pay being paid directly to the clans under silladari system.

The very first operation in which this outfit was employed was in Bazar area {zakka Khel} and they did well. The role of them was more of a scout leading the way for the British regular army units and keeping the pass open mostly from their own clans. In 1890 the government in recognition of their service and as a mark of trust started issuing them the official rifles

**On 1<sup>st</sup> March 1946** the Khyber rifles were raised at Sialkot by disbanding the Afridi battalions, the parade was conducted and there were two sets of tables, the soldiers of Afridi battalion marched forward handed over their discharge papers and stepped back..made a salute and marched six steps forward to another table and picked his new papers of being enrolled in the Khyber Rifles'. On that day 1243 men were enrolled and all were Afridi. Their average height was 5.8 inches having a chest expansion of 32 inches-34 inches. Further more six hundred new recruits were also enrolled and another two hundred were inducted from the Frontier Constabulary Tochi scouts, south Waziristan scouts. The very first commandant was Lieutenant Colonel J.R. Booth DS and Subedar major Hamesh Gul Malik Din Afridi had the honour to be the first SM of the Khyber rifles; he had a short tenure and went on pension in October 1946 with an exemplary character. Other native officers as they were known included subedar Awaz Gul also MDK he went on pension in 1953, subedar Alim Khan again a MDK of Zangi village he retired in 1948. Subedar Major Azim Khan was the next SM at Bakka Khel he retired in 1961.

Second enrollment took place on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1946 in which men from other scout corps were also inducted they vary from Hayat Gul Kuki Khel he was just eighteen years of age he went on pension in 1952. Ramzan was also a Kuki Khel from Sperai Village he was recommended by his Malik Safdar Khan. Zamfir was also in his teens just being seventeen he served for another seven years before retiring in 1950. Misam Khan son of Alam Shah a Kuki Khel was also seventeen and he soon deserted in 1948 with a rifle. All in all 1762 men were enrolled in Khyber rifles by the end of 1946. The procedure of enrollment was the same as in other Frontier corps one has to bring the surety of his Malik for enrollment. Overwhelmingly all belong to Afridi or from Khyber. Saida Khan Shinwari was the very first from Shinwari Qaum to be enrolled on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1946 he later on rose to the rank of subedar major before retiring with an exemplary character in 1960. Sepoy Khial Muhammad was from Zakka Khel tribe he had the regimental number of 1753, Sepoy member Kahn was from Aka Khel, Mirza Beg from Sipah, Sepoy Sadozai was a Kuki Khel, Sepoy Mashan Khan was a Mullagori, and son were Sepoy Amir Khan, Dera Khan, Babur Khan and Dabar Gul, these Mullagoris were all having an average age of over 25 years whereas the Afridis were in the bracket of 17-19. Mullagoris were in the average height of 5.5-5.7 inches. Sepoy Siraj Din was from Saghiri Khatatki class he was the eldest having an age of 30 years. Sepoy Umra Khan from Qambar Khel was seventeen at the time of enrollment. Almost all from Khyber agency area with exception such like Sepoy Said Hussain who was from Paarchinar, he was Duparzai, these Sepoys were enrolled into the companies with a clan composition for instance Mullagoris were in 3/12 company which means that the 12<sup>th</sup> platoon of 3<sup>rd</sup> company was composed of Mullagori, Qambar Khel were in the first

company, daparzai in headquartes ccompkany, Zakka Khel s also ahd the second company for enrollment, Sepoy Gul Khamin Shilmani from yangi village wasa mere 15 yaers lad , he went on to serve till 1957. There were Yousafzai aso but these were mostly old vetraen who were put in the headquarters company like Havildar Muhammad yousaf Yousafzai, he was 44 years of age. For special tardes like armourer and black smith the Punjabi Muslims wee also enrolled like Armourer Muhammad sadiq he belonged to Akhnur. Shinwaris , Mullagori and shilman had the average age of under seventeen at enrollment and major reason awas that theyv were not previously enrolled in the afridi battalions and under the new arising they got the opportunity thus they all were young blood. These young lads did serve for seven yeas when majority of them got the discharged with good character certificates. On the eve of independence the strength was 1838 sepoy.

There were two wings having eight companies nand aheadquarters wing. No 1 wing was being commanded by Major J.Letts. It was a blend of youth and experience. One key factor in enrollment and stay in Khyber rifle was the assessment of character in case the rcruit afils to bring any evidence of being a sound character he was discharged, the bitter experience of 1919 was still fresh. For instance No.1729 recruit saidan Shahkuki Khel ,2/10 company awas discharged on the last day of 1946 'unlikely to become efficient soldier. Medical grounds were another afctor for retention in the Khyber rifles, sepoy Azam Khan of 4/17 company was discharged alos on the alslt day of 1946 on medical grounds. The last punishment of the year 1946 was given to the Sepoy Awal Shah for 'stealing government property' he was given 21 days rigourous punishment. The KR wre sttationeda t landi kotal, there was a army brigade strength present at the station as well known as the field brigade landi kotal.. Rifle .303 was the standard weapon nand firing it without pemission was an offence punishable with fines. The discipline and all other matter were conducted under the 1941 NWFC Law, the section 9{p} deals with the firing of weapon. All mpromotions in the corps especially that of officers and subeadrs apart from postings were published in the NWFP governmet gazette.

The Khyber rifles was deployed at landi Kotal being the headquartes with one wing at Ali Masjid & Shagai {No.2 wing under command Major M.C Smith} and other at Landi Kotal { No 1 wing Major J.Letts he was reverted back to military in March 1947 and was replaced by Major J.M.Penly}.

Muslims officers included captain Kaarmatullah followed by captain jaahngir Khan.The pioneer Indian officers{junior commissioned officers} of Khyber Rifles were Subeda sohbat Khan Kuki Khel, subedar Ziarat Khan Qambar Khel, subedar Aka Khel shah Sipah, subedar Haider Khan Qambar Khel, subedar sheikh Nur Malik din Khel, Subedar Hasham Ali Zakha Khel, Jemadar sadozai kuki khel, Jemadar Wazir Shilman,Jemadar Hussain Gul qambar Khel, Jemadar lal akbar qambar khel and Jemadar Khiamat Khan Kamrai. They were the nucleus around which the khybewr rifles took birth in 1946, they all underwent year of probation and they wee confirmed in their rank in March 1947. In the asme breadth thee we retirements also , Jemadar Bahadur Khan MDK and subedar fazl rahim were transferred to pension establishment in the spring of 1947. Probation period was strict and only the officers who passed the scrutiny were confirmed in the arnk and in other acse the period was extended in case there was any doudbt in efficiency like Jemaadr payo Gul and alam sjhah had a

extension of six months before they were confirmed in their ranks. Same holds true for havildars who also had to undergo probation period of six months

1947. Year started on a pleasant and promising start with commandant making promotion, four naiks were promoted havildar on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1947 with another four becoming naiks and three becoming lance naiks, further 33 were made lance naiks { nine Mullagori, eight qamar Khel, four Zakka Khel, ten from Kuki Khel and three from Malik din Khel }. Promotion from sepoy to lance naik was based upon qaum; however demotion had nothing to do with qaum rather it was based on efficiency, as naik Ghundal Khan Aka Khel learnt on 3<sup>rd</sup> January when he was reduced to the rank of for inefficiency. Discipline was kept strict from the embryo stage, loss of empty case was a crime having a punishment of rupee one as fine. When the pay of a soldier was rupees 18 per month. There were frequent transfers from one wing to other from one company to the other. A sepoy had the choice to get his discharge by paying rupees 30/-; it depended upon service as well. Punishment and rewards were the prerogative of the commandant, a wing commander would recommend the soldiers for promotion, on the other hand he would also make a charge sheet for the commandant to award punishment. Absent without leave, over stay leave were the two most common features of soldiers getting punishment. Fourteen days rigorous imprisonment was a normal sentence for over staying leave even if it does not exceed three days in length. Clerks usually get away in such matters one they are educated and as such knew how to manipulate the regulations but they had a sensitive work to perform, they were paid a staff allowance of Rs 10/pm from regimental fund. Clerk Syed Hussain and soldier Clerk Mahmud Khan were the most efficient, Lala Sita Ram was the head clerk. Rendering of the government issued items before the expiry of date was another crime. Loss of rifle component was again fined with recovery made through the pay. These include even a small component such as screw band inner, nut screw protector or screw plate butt.

Drivers for arsh driving were charged and punished as well, driver Payo Shah was deprived of three months driver allowance in mid February 1947 for injuring a soldier of army at Peshawar in mid December 1946, Naik Abdul Majeed had to forfeit his two month driving allowance for arsh driving 'he drove a government truck in a negligent manner'. Lance Naik Ati Khan forfeited three days pay for exceeding speed limit in Landi Koytal camp. Sepoy driver Zangir also had to forfeit his three days pay for driving on right of way without sufficient cause. The aim was to instill the traffic discipline and there is no better and more efficient way than inflicting financial loss. Even use of foul language or insulting manners by a sepoy or any junior to his senior was a charge sheet offense

Even cooks were not saved from the discipline, loss of cooking utensils was a crime and punishable with fine, Jemadar Khaisat Gul and sepoy Gul Zir were both fined rupees 2-11 each for the loss of one parat and one katora. Lance Naik Marjan was the nursing orderly, he lost one field dressing in last week of February 1947 and was fined 0-11-6 rupees. Breaking of a bulb was another crime punishable with fine, Sepoy Baidar Gul had never seen an electric bulb before and he hit it with a stone to see what is inside he had to pay Rs 2/12/- for the knowledge he gained. If a sentry failed to perform his duty then it was his guard commander who had to face the music, reduced to naik. Lack of items at post was again the fault of post

commander, e.g. Naik gulistan at fort Manda {No.1 wing} reprimanded 'an act prejudicial to good order and discipline, in that he as post commander did not ensure that the men of his post were in possession of oil bottles, pull throughs, and seals'. But the best is when Lance naik Kaim gul was charged on 15<sup>th</sup> april 1947 by the last ady of Lieutenant colonel's Booth 's command 'an act prejudicial to good order & military discipline in that he was extremely idle on guard' ; end result was 'deprived of his lance naik rank'. Lieutenant colonel Sharif maintained the same high standards of discipline, improper dress for guard duty, failing to report that the telephone at the post is out of order and to ensure that the sentry at his piquet is alert were the charges which resulted in severe reprimand for Havildar Sher Afzhan at Piquet 3040 on 25<sup>th</sup> april 1947, the very first day of Shariff's command. In another case a sentry was given seven days punishment that a while sentry {sepoy Baz gul} did not obey the guard's commander's order to stop talking to a passing civilian'.

A subedar on promotion was put on a probation period of one year, a naib subedar was called a Jemadar and a subedar as subedar. Lieutenant {temporary Captain} K.D. Dhanoo was a jolly officer and he joined the Khyber Rifles in January 1947, Captain Karamatullah was the sole muslim officer in Khyber rifles till February 1947. In the absence of commandant the wing commander at Landi Kotal {Major J. Letts} used to perform as the commanding officer, note the difference. Good service pay an incentive for keeping the discipline intact it was Rupees three for a havildar and rupees two for the naik. Musketry prizes were meant for good firer, in very such event Havildar Jallat Khan scored 62 points in medium machine gun category, Naik Sherza Khan had the first position in 1st Class with 45 points. Prize generally range between rupee one to two. Soldiers were granted two months leave and officers 28 days leave known as War leave within India.

Training of different trades was carried out rigorously, signalers were trained at Peshawar signals it included Morse Code reading, exchange operating, wireless procedures and radio telegraphy; they were judged as good, very good or very fair in each category, signal platoon commander was Jemadar Said Amir and he was authorized to draw a special allowance. Their examination included buzz reading, signaling, flag reading, Hailo or lamp reading, cable jointing and cells primary.

Company weapon courses were attended at Infantry weapons wing, infantry school at Saugor. The students were graded in knowledge and in instructional ability, Jemadar Khialmat Shah and havildar Said Shah both attended the course and where as Khialmat was awarded above average grade, said got average in knowledge and below average in instructional ability. Signal training was conducted at army signal school at Poona, a jemadar was authorized a batman in normal course of duty and also while on a course as well, it may come as surprise but it used to take only three cadets to move from Landi Kotal and report at Poona. Arsenal stores were brought from Rawalpindi.

An educational establishment was started in april 1947, there were 15 soldiers who formed part of it headed by Jemadar Safdar Khan and Jemadar Gulab Khan they were given a staff allowance of Rs 10/- per month. Naik Makhmud Gul MDK, it thus ceased the pupil-teacher who thus ceased to draw their staff pay of Rs 5/-

The purchase of mules was conducted from Saharanpur where a party of no less than ten soldiers with a havildar would proceed for purchase from Remount Depot; it would take almost three weeks for the complete exercise. These mules were branded with letter K, Khyber Rifles had the mules having serial number from 800 onwards for instance No.K891 was a mare and K979 was a Gelding mule. Sick animals were treated and admitted at Peshawar veterinary hospital, a mule driver was always required to act as the attendant. In March 1947 mule driver stayed at Peshawar vet hospital with two sick donkeys for almost three weeks and it was counted as duty.

Ration was good and sufficient, soldiers were provided ration at reduced rates, in January 1947 the KR was providing ration at following rates. Atta 3 seers and two chattraks cost one rupee, in same amount a soldier could buy 12 chattraks of sarsoon oil, 11 seers of salt in one rupee, tea black loose was 3/5 per seer, Dal gran was costing 4 seers per single rupee rice was bit expensive as Daud Zai rice fetched only one seer and nine chattraks in one rupee, other quality of rice was known as hashtnagri, sugar and gur were almost being sold on same price 1 seer and 10 chattraks for sugar and only one chattrak less for gur. Milk was supplied by the contractor and also by the military adiry, contractor was supplying at a rate of -9/- per seer and military adiry at -9/6, per seer. From April 1947 Lipton white label tea was issued to troops as part of ration in one pound packet, usual method was that platoons would draw the tea and then use it collectively, one pound tea was good for 160 soldiers for a day i.e. one chattrak per 20 men per day.

Clerk Shiva another Hindu, an efficient typist he was mainly responsible for typing the Part 2 orders and as such was always held in high esteem by the soldiers. Kot or pay havildars were responsible for maintaining the platoon messing in order. The wearing of equipment was in line with the south wazirsitan scouts where the haversack was on left side and water bottle on right side. From 1<sup>st</sup> March 1947 the men admitted in hospitals were not allowed to have the ration and compensatory allowance for the period of stay in hospital. Venereal disease on detection rendered the affected person deprived of proficiency pay till he has been declared medical fit from infection, Sepoy Payo Khan was the very first case detected in the corps, he had contracted the infection in October 1946 but was detected in March 1947.

There were few Hindus and Sikhs in Khyber rifles as well like Bhisti Gulab Singh, Ram Dass, sweeper walia, Marai, Uda, Nawab and Peshawari, to name a few all such trades including dhobi come under the S company. Even Muhammad Ayub dhobi was struck off the strength because he was unlikely to become an efficient dhobi whereas Dhobi Zain Gul was retained. There were honorary appointments among the trades, these were purely for keeping discipline and had no effect in pay, only commandant was authorised to make such honorary appointments, very first such honorary appoint holders included Langri Samandar as head langri, Sher Akbar as head khalasi, Head tailor Allah Bakhsh, head Mochi Fazal Rakhman, Head carpenter Mohamamd Hussain, Mule driver Saifed Gul, Bhisti Ju Muhammad and Khalasi Sher Akbar were all made honorary lance naiks. In June 1946 one silk bed sheet and one handkerchief was stolen from Sikh Gurdwara at Jamrud and Sepoy Lowar Khann was found guilty; he had to undergo 28 days rigorous imprisonment for this folly. Items were stolen from



In April 1947 another batch of recruits were inducted and trained they all were from Khyber tribes mainly Mullagori and Kuki Khel Afridi. These recruits after enlistment were posted to the wings who were responsible for training which included mainly firing and drill.

Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Sheriff Khan MBE, took over the command of the Khyber Rifles on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1947, Khyber Rifles thus have the distinction of being the only Frontier Corps corps to have a native Muslim officer in command on independence. Lieutenant Rahmat Ullah Durrani of FF Rifles joined Khyber Rifles on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1947

14<sup>th</sup> August 1947. It was a glorious day, sunny but windy, few clouds hovering over the Tantarra ridge, subedar major Azim Khan Qambar Khel and Jemadar Dilawar Khan Kuki Khel were made second lieutenants on this auspicious day.

### **Khyber Rifles 1950s**

In July 1954 the class composition of the KR underwent a drastic change when eight platoons of Afridi replaced by the six platoons of Khattak which comprised of two platoons each of Akora, Seni and Barak and two platoons of Yousafzais, the latter were transferred from Zhb militia and former from south Waziristan Scouts. Thus the original composition of the corps being comprised exclusively of Khyber Agency tribes was altered, next year in August 1955 an additional but temporary increase of eight platoons along with two officers were sanctioned, this was exclusively for the Warsak Dam protection which was being constructed. These eight platoons had Orakzai & Bangash both sunnis {two platoons each}, Adam Khel Afridi's also had two platoons and Daur and Wazir one each; these platoons were newly raised where as other were transferred from Tochi Scouts and south Waziristan scouts. Daur were for the first time inducted in Frontier Corps, The overall strength of the corps thus reached an all time high of 9 officers, 58 JCOs, 101 havildars, 102 naiks and 1639 lance naiks and sepoy's there by making a grand total of 1909.

Major Zia Ul Haq. Later chief of army staff and president of Pakistan, reported at Khyber rifles in March 1954 from guides cavalry, he had served on temporary attachment with Tochi scouts also but now he was permanently posted, he commanded No.3 wing which mainly look after the Warsak Dam. His family also moved here at Landi Kotal. Major Zia was a popular officer mainly due to his good nature, humbleness and religious inclination and all these are the qualities most required in a scout along with good physical stamina and professional approach. He despite all his efforts could not master the Pashtu language but he understood it when others were speaking. A keen tennis player and always a volunteer for gashts. When General Zia became the president and he visited his old Rifles, his handiwal approached him and requested for the construction of a track till his village ..killay, General smilingly not only sanctioned a road as per his handiwal's desire but also made sure that electricity should also reach there. Present Charbagh road thus not only benefits the killi but the Khyber rifles Wing also gained immense advantage as it now linked it with main pass.

In 1957 the corps was being commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Serin Khan who later on not only became the Inspector General Frontier Corps but also had the distinction of becoming a three star general officer. As a commandant his contributions are many buty

compiling of the standing orders was a deep reaching act. Khyber Rifles was responsible for the protection of the international border {Durand line all along the Khyber Agency's limits, it was also responsible to guard and protect within the agency the lines of communication both rail and road, protection of Warsak Dam and other pumping stations and above all to assist the political administration in the maintenance of law and order.

## Khyber – Chitral 4<sup>th</sup> September 2013

I had no plan to leave Khyber all of a sudden, I wanted to stay nights at Ali Masjid and Jamrud fort, above all the atmosphere and environment are good, commandant Colonel Mansoor Janjua, Adjutant Major Naeem, Major Raza and DQ Major Habib, not to forget the Lieutenant colonel Ali and Mushtaq; but even then one starts feeling uncomfortable as one is not part of the organization. On the morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 I got a text message from Madam Carey Schoffield requesting me to be at Chitral for her school function. It was the most unexpected text message which I received and frankly I would have been less surprise had that message been from the presidency. There was no second thought, I mean how can you turn down such a lovely request. I confirmed it and later I thought how I am going to make it to Chitral in one day. Geography now started playing in reality, I can reach Chitral within a day provided if I travel on historical passage of following the Khyber pass and then turning left and going to Arandu via Kunar river pass but now they are closed and I have to follow the Peshawar-Malakand-Lowari onwards to Chitral. I narrated the whole episode to Colonel Janjua, he also knows the madam as she had visited his regiment {25 cavalry} in Kharian for the writing of the book. Luckily he was also going to Peshawar on 4<sup>th</sup> to attend the conference thus I made a plan to go with him till Peshawar. I had also made my mind to hire a taxi from Peshawar to Chitral. I informed the PC {person to contact} of Khyber Rifles at Hayatabad for this, he promptly confirmed the reservation rather he was intelligent enough to get the taxi to Hayatabad to save time. Fare was rupees 9500, which was ok, but the issue was that I had only twenty rupees in my pocket. I banked upon the banking machine for this.

Early in the morning I was ready, full of excitement and anxiety about the coming hours. Colonel Janjua was kind enough to present me with a shield and then we departed in the

cavalcade. Khyber Pass now looks familiar after reading so much about the history, I was keen to see the Ali Masjid gorge the water points and so on. It was a warm day, dusty but the Khyber Rifle made their way through amaze of traffic holdups. These drivers are fascinating in nature and in skills, they drive fast and almost reckless but that seems to be the natural way of driving here in the pass. A normal scenery, trucks moving both way, cars, taxis and pick ups. School children and few ladies were seen on the roadside. Road construction is still going on which creates a mass of dust storms which chokes your nostrils. Took few snaps as well, Gul Hasan Kuki Khel was sitting in my vehicle and he helped me in this. Within an hour we were at Peshawar, I bid good bye to commandant and met the PC who was standing with the black Toyota taxi. Driver was not fluent with Urdu. First issue was to get the money from ATM at Askari Bank; it was here that I had the first of Murphy Law, the card was blocked by the machine but luckily the manager was in office and he retracted it and I had to change the pass word before I got the money, I drew 25000 rupees

### Chapter III Chitral Scouts 1903-2013

I have travelled twice to Chitral; one was in 1995 when I came alone from Multan on a fifteen days leave to travel from Peshawar to Gilgit via Chitral. It was October then and I took the last wagon from Peshawar city at around 1900 hours. It was journey mostly in darkness where I had no idea about the history or the geography through which I was passing by. We stopped short of Lowari top, there was a women also travelling and I was just inquisitive about her identity. In early morning hours we crossed the top and by morning we were in the Chitral. I had no idea about the town, one van took me to the Chitral Mess where I introduced myself and was given a room. I spent the night in the mess and next day travelled to the Kalash Valley as there seems to be no other purpose of coming to Chitral than to see these Kafir people. I had been reading the Kafiristan by Surgeon Marshall and as such had inkling about them. I stayed in a local hotel, bought the local wine and just sat outside drinking it and smoking hashish and enjoying the scenery and people. In this state I remained for hours and slowly and gradually I observed that I have lost that uniqueness which these people generally attach with the visitors; I was harmless person. There was a foreigner tourist group as well. They were a mix company mostly retired persons and they were travelling in the Central Asia on a bus.

I observe the local girls and was disappointed to see them wearing the standard Bata shoes, from this point onward they lost all of my inquisitiveness for me they have become commercial. I still recall that one family of two children and their mother sat almost whole day beside me in the open without any talk. I just played with the children and mother kept on doing some of her chores. I felt as if I belong to this place and this is my family. I visited the village, my mind was still thinking about the hidden valleys that lay beyond this Bhumbirit. After spending three nights I was back in Chitral from where after a day occupation I was on board a local jeep stacked with wood and reached Mastuj by last light. In the mess there was a visitor, a foreign military attaché I presumed and who was being given company by a Chitral Scouts officer. I learnt first time about the stone 'laid' and I did not went out to locate it but the military attaché did so. Lieutenant Colonel Murad Khan was a legend even then, he had recently committed suicide {1989} and as such none talked about him when inquired from waiters but in bazaar I did mentioned his name few times and every time the people response was positive.

The wing commander at Mastuj, I forgot his name was kind enough to accommodate me in his home and next morning after breakfast I just started walking towards the Shandur Pass. I also increased my knowledge by appreciating that the best apples are in Mastuj, one man rather the wing commander had told me while presenting some apples that even if you keep them in your luggage the aroma will stay for days.

## **Princely States of India**

Chitral, Dir, Swat, Amb, Kalat were princely states, there were very few such states which became part of Pakistan and where frontier Corps was employed or which became part of it thus it is pertinent to have a brief look at the overall political system of India. There are two terms, one India and other British India to denote the present day Pakistan, India and Bangladesh before 1947. British India encompasses all the area which was previously under the British East India Company and after 1857 came under the jurisdiction of Queen Victoria and British Parliament headed by Prime Minister. The Parliament appointed a viceroy normally for tenure of six-eight years. Within the cabinet there was an India office headed by a Secretary of India, it was he who was answerable to the Prime Minister on India. It must be noted that for foreign affairs of Great Britain there was a foreign secretary also but he had no jurisdiction on India. In India the viceroy was the last word on all affairs, he had a commander in chief of army, a secretary of foreign affairs and other officials. India was divided administratively into Provinces which included Bombay {Sind was part of it} Bengal, United Provinces and after 1849 the Punjab; within which the NWFP was created in 1903 but it was not at par with other provinces as it was directly placed under the viceroy due to its strategic position.

Apart from provinces there were over 560 princely states of various size and population, the big states included Hyderabad Deccan, Jammu & Kashmir. Gwalior, Baroda to name a few. British gradually moved westward and in this process certain states were annexed like Oudh in 1852 which became a province and many others were left at their own on certain conditions the paramount being, not to indulge or support anti British military campaigns. These states were ruled by princes, although all the states had different titles like raja, rao, nawab, thakur, nizam to name a few but British all classified them as princes. Thus '**British India**' denotes the area which was under British administration in form of provinces and '**India**' represents the princely states. 122 states were directly ruled by the central government from Calcutta {Delhi became capital after 1911} in other over 400 states there were political agents who were responsible to the provincial governors, commissioners and deputy commissioners. **Tribal Areas** were different from the other two misnomers of India and British India and they remained so till the last day of raj. These tribal areas mostly on western frontiers but also on eastern and northern frontiers were directly under the viceroy, the political agents were carefully selected and till 1930 all were British. The political agents were responsible to the foreign office of India. In case of NW Frontier the political agents communicated in the same pattern to the chief commissioner, the first governor of NW Frontier was appointed in 1935. Baluchistan itself was another adjoining political agency south of NW Frontier. The princes of these states were given subsidy and were allowed certain gun salutes depending upon their importance. Viceroy was authorized 1010 gun salute whereas the Nizam of Deccan and maharaja of Kashmir were entitled 21 gun salutes most of the princes were entitled nine gun salutes. States were allowed to have a militia or army with British officers overlooking the affairs. Honorary ranks of lieutenant to general {very rarely} were bestowed upon the

princes, states had their own flags and were not bound to follow the British legal system as enforced in British India rather own cultures were followed.

**Indian Army and British Army in India** also represent two different segments of the army. The regular British army regiments had a tenure of duty in India spanning over five to seven years, they had exclusive all British ranks.; they were known as British Army in India. The standard army which took its birth with the BEIC comprising of British Officers and native other ranks was known as Indian Army`. Native officers were given commissioned after First World War. Indian Army had its own commander in chief; there was some discrepancy among the allowances of both armies. It was in 1907 that a new corps was raised known as frontier Corps mainly responsible for the Western Frontiers of India & British India. Ironically there were few princely states on the western frontiers they included Kashmir in the north followed by Nigar, Hunza, Tangrel, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Amb, Tank and Kalat in south. A new concept of military was introduced comprising of Militia, Levies, Scouts, Rifles, Border Military police supported by regular army.

Politically the administration was run on bureaucratic system with precise instructions and protocols to follow. The officers who were inducted in the district administration were either inducted directly through the competitions or from regular army; again either on recommendations or through examination. These officers were allowed to retain their army ranks and were also allowed to automatically enhance their prefixes of rank in accordance with the routine promotion of officers in army. Thus Major General Sikander Mirza one of the very first Indian to receive his commission from Sandhurst in 1920 was inducted in foreign service and posted as political agent when he was captain but despite remaining in civil service he still changed his rank when ever his seniority was promoted in army, he finally became a defence secretary of Pakistan in 1952 and then a governor general and finally he took oath as the first president of Pakistan in 1956. Suzerainty over British India & India from 1857 onwards rested with the crown Queen Victoria was proclaimed as Empress of India in 1876 followed by King –Emperor Edward VII, the title Emperor was meant for India.

Princely states were organized into presidency {Madras} Residency {Kashmir, Deccan} and agency. These state agencies dealt with the princely states, the North Western Frontier States Agency looked after the princely states on North western frontier, down below was the Baluchistan Agency which had the {Kalat, Khairan, Las Bela, Makran}. One distinct feature of this western frontier was the creation of political agencies on the same footing as for princely states to deal with the tribes, who hitherto never had any central authority to submit. Political agent in these tribal agencies had the same position as other political agents rather they were the pick of the pick, personally interviewed by the viceroy which mainly was in the form of the evening tea with viceroy and vicereine.

This whole composition and relation between the princes and suzerain remained as per royal protocol based upon century old customs. Ironically the layout of the states was such that British India did not have any direct contact with the Afghanistan, Iran and China. The tribes inhabiting these tracts were free men in every sense. They were not savage like the African tribes with whom the white men first had contact. The tribes on the eastern frontier were different in every sense from the western tribes separated by a thousand miles. The eastern frontier was jungle with Burma as the neighbor, weather tropical with torrential rainfall, swamps and weather based water channels, jungle full of wild life. How civilization penetrated is still a mystery as when they were discovered they were living and are still living in the old Dravidian jungle way of life. Humid weather gave them dark skin, short height, fragile body and a culture basing upon nudity. Burma was eventually annexed with British India after the Anglo-Burmese wars

**Chitral Scouts** were raised on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1903 at Drosh and on the eve of first Great War it had a strength of almost a thousand men organized into two wings. In 1942 it was named as Chitral State Scouts and came under the control of Frontier Corps, in 1953 it reverted to its old nomenclature. Chitral State Scouts played a key and vital role in the Kashmir Liberation of 1947-48. In June 1973 another wing was raised. In June 1986 one more wing was added and next year in July two more wings and artillery battery were also added. It was raised at Chitral in 1903 but shifted to Drosh in 1926 and later move back to Chitral in 1992.

Chitral has a history, which is not yet fully understood, the state known, as Chitral is infact an amalgamation of many small fiefdoms, serfdoms and odd tribes most obvious being the Kafir. Chitral is infact a combination of two major rivers namely the TrichMir River and Yarkhun River; both meet just a mile upstream of present day airport and just miles away from the century old fort and the city itself. These two rivers express two distinct identities and cultures and it is only at Chitral that these two cultures join together.

Chitral is the gateway to Asian sub continent as no less than half a dozen passes all above 12000 feet opens into it from west and equal number are on east and few odd in south which allows any traveller from central Asia to enter it and then follow one of the river and exit it through the River Chitral into Afghanistan at Arandu; it is possible only through Arandu Pass that cultivation and fruits can be sent to Peshawar or Kabul from Chitral in a day and this is what makes Chitral special in relation to Afghanistan.

The two upper valleys which are separated by high mountains' as high as 18000 feet represent two distinct civilisations, the eastern or the right valley as seen from Chitral is known as Yarkhun Valley or Mastuj Valley, it leads towards the Wakhan strip and further towards Kashgir by going through the Broghul and darwaza pass 'door' and very rightly it is the door to sub continent . This valley or path also leads towards the Gilgit, Indus Valley and further into the Chinese Turkestan through the Leh and Kashmir. The TrichMir River Valley also known as Lotukh or Injigan leads towards the Badkhashan and further west towards the Aral sea. Now all this si seen from present but lets go back 5000 years ago and see how it looks then. The major evidence in hand is the geography which has remained unchanged in all these years , yes there are mountain landslides, there were earthquakes, floods but by and large TrichMir still stands as it was thousand years ago, other interesting evidence is the presence of idol Kafir tribe which is unique in a sense that it has been able to preserve its identity even today, they are not nomadic in nature but to some extent holds the key to past.

Aryan migration started in 2000-3000 years ago from Central Asian highlands which were climatically extreme in winter with little to grow moreover the builin natural instinct of human must have drove him downwards. We have only hypothesis but nothing concrete to proof like the Egyptians and Mesopotamian or Chinese civilisations, but one thing is common that civilisation took birth on the banks of river and in the lap of mountains ; thus there is nothing abnormal to write that the early civilisation took birth at the TrichMir and from there it moved down ward and towards the west. Mountains have a charm of themselves and in all our mythology world over it has been the mountains which remained the abode of god, let it not be forgotten that Moses went up the Mount Sinai to have the commandments.

**Chitral Scouts** have quite a few distinctive marks for once they do not speak Pashtu secondly they are from a settled district which has been a princely state in the past and above all they all are from one qaum. There are other cultural features as well , geographically they remained cut off from rest of the country during winter months ,; their only access via Afghanistan . not long ago Toyota Hiace used to ply between the Peshawar and Chitral during winter through Jalalabad into Asmar then into Arandu Valley in Pakistan by passing Lowari and straight to the Chitral. Lowari tunnel is still not open for public use but in winter traffic is allowed thus a millennium old issue has been resolved. Lowari Tunnel project was initiated by the Prime Minister Zulfikar Bhutto in 1973 and completed by President Musharraf in 2007; thus these two personalities and parties have a sway over the people. Chitral is the northernmost and not surprisingly one of the most liberal district of Pakistan ; mainly due to geographic isolation.

**Chitral** has another unique feature the presence of 3000 odd Kafir tribes among over whelming peaceful Muslims; there are no Christians and neither any church in Chitral, the last church on Peshawar – Chitral track is at Mardan in south and none knows about any other in the north for another thousand miles. The Kafir tribe is settled in the lower Chitral on the western bank of Chitral River scattered in three valleys namely the Rumbir, Birir and Bhumbirit . Physically Chitral is the largest district of Pakistan in terms of area, the highest peak of Chitral is Trich Mir which is 25679 feet high and is almost in the upper left of the District. Chitral is like many other mountainous towns, a river passing through it , green valley, houses on the top and peace. Unlike Tochi Valley it is much more green and wide with higher peaks. As compare to the Kurram Valley it is narrower with more steep banks and field elevations. Gilgit and Chitral seems to be identical in nature and their history is also similar in pattern. It is the presence of colourful Kafirs which gives Chitral its unique flavor of history.

**Chitral** covers an area of 5000 square miles and have a population of 315,000 in 2001. In 1895 the population was under 1,00,000 humans, in 1947 it was 1,14,000 and 1,50,000 in 1961. Chitral is a confluence of two valleys , the western being a Trich Mir and the eastern valley runs a distance of 250 miles starting from Sor Yarkun near Oxus few miles east of Broghul in the north , this valley is known as Yarkhun Valley and have Mastuj as the major town. These two valleys and rivers join each other few miles upstream of present airport. From here onwards it is known as Chitral river and runs down to the south in a winding but plain area to the Arandu in the south west, Chitral attained the status of a settled district in 1969, it is divided into two administrative layers, the upper Chitral is known as Mastuj sub division and comprise of three tehsils namely Mastuj, Torkhow and Mulkhow with Buni as the headquarters, Chitral sub division comprises of Chitral, Drosh and Lotkow tehsils. History of the Chitral Scouts is mainly spread in the lower Chitral areas.

### **Early History**

Not much is known about Chitral's early history, it is not mentioned by Herodotus or by the Alexander The Great's historians. Although it seems quite logical basing upon the history to assume that some troops of him must have intruded into the Chitral Valley as no less than 19 passes were available to the troops of Alexander. The Kafirs of Hindukush are the only physical evidence of Chitral's past. Kafirs have two categories, one is known as the Red Kafirs or the Broghul other as the Kalash or the Black Kafirs; it was the Red who were believed to be the masters. Chitral is the first of the many valleys or waterways which the Aryans adopted for their migration downwards. The beauty, serenity, peace and above all the abundance of fresh water all along must have been very tempting for them to settled astride the water flow. Chitral's history is interwoven with other mountainous states likes Gilgit, Dir, Hunza and Swat. Being on the edge of all of them it attained a greater strategic significance. It is the door way to the Central Asia or vice versa a route to the plains. On the north it is

bounded by Oxus or the Wakhan, on the west by Gilgit, Yasin and Ishkoman mountainous states, on the south by Dir and Swat and in the south west by the Afghan province of Asmar and Nuristan.

TirchMir was the mountain god standing majestically at the west of Chitral, the early morning sun rays cast an golden radiant around it and at sunset the crimson color bids farewell to the day journey. Like all other mountains the Aryans worshipped mountains, they were remote , inaccessible yet visible with efforts. Clouds generated around them bringing rain and darkness. At night these clouds would wrap the full moon around its web creating myths and fables; TirchMir is no exception rather it is among those very rare mountains along with Rakaposhi and NangaParbat to have fertile valley running around them. Even among these Tirch Mir stands out as it is more fertile , plain and green in nature. West of Chitral town a couple of miles up stream is the confluence of two rivers which are also two distinct paths of history. The eastern river leads to further north into Wakhan , Hunza, Gilgit, Sinkiang, Kashgar and into China { or towards the Rakaposhi, K-2 , }, where as the western or TirchMir river leads into Afghanistan. Alexander the Great came down towards Indus from the Oxus marching along the fringes of Tirch Mir and there is no reason to doubt that he did not cross into the Tirch Mir River and following River Chitral and later Kunar passed through the Arandu into Bajaur.

Before the arrival of Islam the TrichMir kingdom was under the suzerainty of King of Kabul, Raja Jaipal. It was a Hindu kingdom , Hinduism itself cannot be expressed in the same language as one can use for Christianity ; it si a conglomeration of over five hundred different sects ranging from worshippers of Shiva to the Hanuman. Chitral was one of the finest among such fanatics. Kafirs even at present performs the rituals of social life which are so alien to the civilization even then. They do not bury their dead rather leave them in a wooden casket under a tree. The present grave yard's pine trees are centuries old and wooden casket also of same age with bones visible of recent entrants. The marriage another social indicator of humanity is different too, every village had a male bull responsible for continuity of race. This concept is much closer to the Spartans concept of ideal warriors however here the intention and application seems to be different in the absence of any military laurels. Chitral remained as popular spot for flesh market as Badakhan across the valley in Afghanistan was famous for its horses. That can be one explanation of such a variety of languages as caravans moving west towards the Kashmir preferred crossing it through Arandu thus having only one river to cross instead of two if they choose any pass west of Chitral. Kafirs have one major mystery among there culture, their colourful dress and cap which is part of attire have sea shells and the pattern of the dress is have marked similarity with the tribes of Burma and Thailand especially the mountain tribes of Chiang Mai. There is one theory that these kafirs came from the east rather than the lost descendents of Greek troops. But by and large Chitral remained hidden in history and present hypothesis about its history are based upon geography which ahs remained intact in all these millieniums. The visible, living, strong and alien cultural fragments thus naturally brew theories.

**Islam** came to the Chitral or Khowistan in the aftermath of the Chinese Turk army defeat in the hands of Arabs in 751 AD. Chitral then was ruled by the Sia Posh or Black Kafirs. The upper valleys or Upper Chitral was divided into many smaller Khowistan, Torkhow the upper Khow, Mulkhaw the lower Khow these names persists even today. Buddhism had its impact in the area with one odd inscription of 9<sup>th</sup> Century AD records the fact that the area is under King Jaipal of Kabul. Khowar language has quite a number of words from Sanskrit in it. One stupa of Buddha is still intact at Torkhow known as Kalandar-i-Bhuttani , {mendicant of stone}. Broghul Pas has been the main entry route of Mongols and tartars in the past. Marco Polo referred to the country as Bolor which included Gilgit as well. Another strand of history recalls a Chinese tribe by the name of Yarkhun to have invaded the area.



**Khovar** is the language of Chitral River from snout till Mirkani in the south with varying dialect, in its pure form it is being spoken in the upper Chitral in Mulkhow and Torkhow area; ironically it does not have any written characters thus Persian remained the official language since early days later replaced by Urdu and English. Khovar is like Urdu because it is also a combination of Persian, Turkish and Sanskrit language. Till mid seventies a journal in Khovar language was monthly published by the Government of Pakistan to promote the language. In Lotkow, Madaglasht and Kalashgum the dialect is different. Persian is still spoken and understood by the aristocracy in the Madaglasht in the Shishikuh Valley, Yudgah is spoken in upper Lotkow Valley above Parabek, Dangarik or Palola is spoken in Ashret, Kalkatak, Beroi and Nastiwar or Gawarbat is the language of Arandu. These varieties of language when seen in the context of the Waziristan which has much more area but only two dialect reinforces the theory that Chitral has been abode of many races and cultures which with the passage of time adopted a working pattern rather amicably. The abundance of fresh water and green pastures all along the various streams provided a solid logic against the utter use of violence for the land as observe in the Waziristan.

**By 10<sup>th</sup> century AD** the area was ruled by the Kafirs however Mahmud of Ghazna's rise and his utter destruction of idols in the India must have been the cause of the downfall of kafirs and slowly but gradually they started getting into the small valleys. Tamerlane's conquest of India and his slaughter of Hindus was the last of the nails in the kafir culture. The area however retained its identity as it even today is known as Kafiristan although the major portion which lies in Afghanistan is now known as Nuristan. In 16<sup>th</sup> century the Chitral river banks were under the control of Mughuls with Sah Rais on the throne. His advisor was Sangin Ali an Persian, with the passage of time the family of Sangin Ali came into power and remained so till to date. Within the family there are lineages the Katoras take their name from the Sangin Ali's grandson where as the Khushwaqt take it from the second son.

**Present History** of Chitral begins in 1819 when Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured Kashmir and handed it over to the Dogras as a reward and later British after the defeat of Khalsa in the Anglo-Sikh wars of 1842-1848 sold it to the same Dogra family. Kashmir under the Ghulab Singh expanded outwards to the territories hence alien to the natives of India. They moved east ward towards the Tibet, northwards towards the Laddakh and west wards towards the Gilgit across the river Indus. This was the first and till to date the last invading force crossing Indus into Karakoram mountain range. By 1842 Kashmir durbar had a foothold at Gilgit and became the king makers, a garrison were established at Gilgit as well. The extreme northern states like Hunza and Nagar remained free from these incursions. In the present day Swat there was no state rather a loose conglomeration of khanates like Tanger, Darrel which were rather big in size and located on the eastern banks of River Indus. Kabul was the other major stake holder having a claim to the area of Kashmir as well, thus these small mountainous hamlet states became a battle prize among these two predominant states. Sikhs were religiously tolerant of Muslims and they had the big advantage in having a beard and a turban as part of religion both these items are integral part of western bank of River Indus's cultural and religion.

**After the annexation of Punjab** in 1849 by the British East India Company {BEIC}, Chitral at that time was ruled by the Mehtar, there were two distinct families based upon geography who were the ruling elite, the Khuswaqts in the upper Chitral with stronghold at Mastuj and the Kators who were living in the lower Chitral. It was a classical narrative as both had the common blood running in their veins but both trying to extend their hold. Numerous small principalities in the small valleys put their weight behind each family basing upon their chances of success. Murder was common feature to grab the power. Maharaja of Kashmir made a move and had an alliance with the Kator Shah Afzal Mehtar of Chitral against the Khuswaqts of Mastuj who were attempting to attack Gilgit with the aid of Yasin's ruler. This was the start of Kashmir getting involved into the Chitral affairs. In 1855 for a short period

Chitralis occupied Mastuj but were driven out. The Khuswaqts of Mastuj had Gilgit under their control from 1848 till 1860 when Sikhs got it back after the death of Khushwaqt. On the other hand Shah Afzal Kator died in 1856 and after an intriguing episode his son Aman Ul Mulk became the Mehtar in 1857 and ruled till 1892. He is the father of modern day Chitral. He tried to unite the upper and lower Chitral, expanded his territory which included Gilgit, Ghizar & Thui and Chiga Sarai in present day Afghanistan. Khuswaqts led by Pahlwan made a venture to capture Gilgit in 1880 but in his absence Aman Ul Mulk captured Mastuj and that ends the story of Khuswaqts.

Aman Ul Mulk more importantly opened up the country for the British. In 1885 the need to understand the western approaches to India were felt. The threat of Russia making an incursion through the Broghul Pass was a distant reality. An army team led by Colonel Lockhart visited Chitral and met Mehtar Aman Ul Mulk.

**British in North.** British venture into the north started in 1830 when travelers and foreign department officers disguised as saints and travelers gathered knowledge about the remote north. Names like George Hayward who was murdered in 1870 at Darkot, Mason, Burnes of Bukhara and later George Robertson who was the first British to live in kafir territory made headlines. Britain established an agency at Gilgit in 1880 with Colonel Biddulph as the political agent but it was short lived. In 1892 the Gilgit Agency was again established which also monitored the affairs in Chitral. Chitral after Colonel Lockhart was visited by Colonel Algernon Durand in 1888 and 1889. Chitral or more precisely Aman Ul Mulk played power politics, in the past Chitral had been a subject of Badakshan in a nominal manner and now Kabul asserted the same pressure. Mehtar tried to have a betrothal with Kabul but it did not take place, on the other hand when Mehtar felt threatened from Kabul he made an overture towards Kashmir in 1874 which resulted in a kind of pact between two states linking the defence of Chitral with Kashmir; British were the referee; in the end Chitral came under British sphere of influence and this became a bone of contention between the Kabul and Calcutta.

1891 was another watershed year in the history of northern areas. The Nilt and Hunza valley rulers became embroiled in a clash with the British led by Colonel Durand with British and Kashmir troops under his command. In December the forts at Nilt were overcome after great dexterity shown by the troops. Chitral remained neutral in this affair; Gilgit Scouts took birth after this expedition and a permanent agency was established at Gilgit with political agent in charge. It must be kept in mind that agency was established at Gilgit but it still remained under the Kashmir control it was only in 1936 that the agency was leased by the British from Kashmir.

**Durand Line & Siege of Chitral - 1895.** In 1893 the agreement was signed by the Afghanistan and British India to have a demarcation of their respective international boundaries which for the first time were established as well. The tribes interpretation of the agreement was based upon the hypothesis that British are intent to wipe out their culture and religion and this soon became a mind set which was fanned by the Afghanistan obviously.

Chitral differs from other parts of Durand Line in a manner because the River Chitral after traversing the territory again falls back to the Afghanistan, there are 29 passes that led to Chitral from Afghanistan starting from Darwaza Pass in the north to the Arandu or Aranwali in the south. Trouble initially started with the demarcation at Asmar within Afghanistan. Umra Khan of Jandol was another key player he was the son in law of Aman ul Mulk, pathan by race he was the chief khan of Lowari Pass. After Aman's death the bloody intrigues for the Mehtarship started among the various sons of late

Aman ul Mulk {he had eighteen sons} finally it was the British weight which made Afzal Ul Mulk triumphant, it was short lived as Kabul back Sher Afzal soon took the reins after bloody coup. British now backed Nizam Ul Mulk another son of late Aman ul Mulk this resulted in Sher Afzal leaving the area as he entered through **Doeah** pass back into Afghanistan. A British agent George Robertson was stationed at Chitral. He started his move in **January 1893** towards the Chitral from Gilgit with 50 men of 15<sup>th</sup> Sikh Battalion, Captain Young husband a famous traveler was his assistant along with Lieutenant Gordon and Bruce. A native by the name Abdul Hakim also accompanied the Robertson. He arrived at Chitral and established himself, he was now the British representative and his main task was to act as a listening post of on the northern gates of India.

### **Chitral Siege – 1895**

The classic act of frontier romance, an mountainous kingdom besieged by the wicked ruler and tribes and held out by a brave and loyal force of natives led by British officers, few casualties , no major clash or massive bloodbath. It was after 1857 that the act of Lucknow Residency was reenacted with a happy ending, that is how Chitral Siege has gone down in the frontier history. It was different from Hunza & Nagar campaign as no Victoria Cross was awarded . It had a strategic implication had the Umra Kahn of Jandol the most able and famous of the Pathan Khans been successful in his campaign to have Chitral under his influence then the British would have received a serious dent in the Forward policy. The British officers and their escort were threatened and they timely got behind the safety of the fort. Meanwhile Umra Khan, Sher afzal and Mehtar were all gathered around the fort. The fort held out for well over a month under persistent dangers waiting for relief. The relief forces came from Gilgit and peshaawar.

**Chitral State** was part of Dir, Swat & Chitral Agency which comprised of vast territory of Hindukush and the border of Peshawar District and thus taken as agency of Peshawar.

In the aftermath of Chitral Siege of 1895, a new political agency was formed known as , Dir & Swat political agency with its headquarters at Malakand, Chitral was added to it a year later in 1896. Thus an assistant political officer used to manage the affairs of the Chitral; before this it was the political agency of Gilgit which was looking after the British interest in the state. It should be kept in mind that in 1891 under the Mehtar Amin ul Mulk the Chitral had agreed to hand over its foreign affairs mainly the relationship with the Afghanistan to the British.

The **Chitral Levies** were raised in 1897 by the assistant political agent at Chitral; it was his personal escort and force to implement the orders, it had a strength of 100 men . Mehtar had his own bodyguards numbering over 2000 and there was no regular army of Mehtar; there was one British army unit along with two guns which was stationed at Chitral. They had built a new fort a mile west and up of old fort which was besieged. Chitral levies thus perform the duties of border military police as well. Border military police was a system organized initially by the British after the annexation of Punjab in which originally the local tribesmen were task to perform the duty of manning the border with the tribes and mainly to stop their wrath in their own area. It was run on silladari system under which the local headmen produce the manpower and horses and get the pay as well; it was later abolished and the same tribesmen were paid directly by the state,. A assistant deputy commissioner in each district except Kohat was the head of this police. By 1903 it had 2300 strength.

British garrison which was stationed at the Chitral amounted to two infantry regiments, , one company of miners and sappers, one section of two guns. A line of communication was opened from

Mardan through Malakand, Chakdara, Dir via Lowari to Drosh ; it was the responsibility of Khan of Dir to keep it open in his area for which he was given subsidy as well. Dir Levies were raised in 1897 for this purpose they were under command of the Khan of Dir. Similarly levies were also raised at Malakand known as Malakand Levies. This garrison was annually relieved utilizing this route. It was only in 1936 that the first ever relief using motor vehicles was utilized, the road from Chakdara was vastly improved by then still Lowari had to be crossed on foot. RAF from 1929 onwards started providing air lift and in 1937 an aerial relief was carried out in the winter when passes remained close. Chitral Levies initially had to look after the three post namely Ziarat, Mirkani and Arandu

## **Princely States of India**

Chitral , Dir, Swat, Amb, Kalat were princely states , there were very few such states which became part of Pakistan and where frontier Corps was employed or which became part of it thus it is pertinent to have a brief look at the overall political system of India. There are two terms , one India and other British India to denote the present day Pakistan, India and Bangladesh before 1947. British India encompasses all the area which was previously under the British east India Company and after 1857 came under the jurisdiction of queen Victoria and British parliament headed by Prime minister. The parliament appointed a viceroy normally for tenure of six-eight years. Within the cabinet there was a India office headed by a secretary of India , it was he who was answerable to the prime minister on India. It must be noted that for foreign affairs of Great Britain there was a foreign secretary also but he had no jurisdiction on India. In India the viceroy was the last word on all affairs, he had a commander in chief of army, a secretary of foreign affairs and other officials. India was divided administratively into Provinces which included Bombay{Sind was part of it} Bengal, United Provinces and after 1849 the Punjab; within which the NWFP was created in 1903 but it was not at par with other provinces as it was directly placed under the viceroy due to its strategic position.

Apart from provinces there were over 560 princely states of various size and population , the big states included Hyderabad Deccan , Jammu & Kashmir. Gwalior, Baroda to name few. British gradually moved westward and in this process certain states were annexed like Oudh in 1852 which became a province and many other were left at their own on certain conditions the paramount being , not to indulge or support anti British military campaigns. These states were ruled by princes, although all the states had different titles like raja, rao, nawab, thakur, nizam to name few but British all classified them as princes. Thus ‘ **British India** ’ denotes the area which was under British administration in form of provinces and ‘ **India** ’ represents the princely states. 122 states were directly ruled by the central government from Calcutta {Delhi became capital after 1911} in other over 400 states there were political agents who were responsible to the provincial governors, commissioners and deputy commissioners. **Tribal Areas** were different from the other two misnomers of India and British India and they remained so till the last day of raj. These tribal areas mostly on western frontiers but also on eastern and northern frontiers were directly under the viceroy, the political agents were carefully selected and till 1930 all were British. The political agents were responsible to the foreign office of India. In case of NWFrontier the political agents communicated in the same pattern to the chief commissioner, the first governor of NWFrontier was appointed in 1935. Baluchistan itself was another adjoining political agency south of NWFrontier . The princes of these states were given subsidy and were allowed certain gun salutes depending upon their importance. Viceroy was authorized 1010 gun salute whereas the Nizam of Deccan and maharaja of Kashmir were entitled 21 gun salutes most of the princes were entitled nine gun salutes. States were allowed to have a militia or army with British officers overlooking the affairs. Honorary ranks of lieutenant to general {very rarely} were bestowed upon the

princes, states had their own flags and were not bound to follow the British legal system as enforced in British India rather own cultures were followed.

**Indian Army and British Army in India** also represent two different segments of the army. The regular British army regiments had a tenure of duty in India spanning over five to seven years, they had exclusive all British ranks.; they were known as British Army in India. The standard army which took its birth with the BEIC comprising of British Officers and native other ranks was known as Indian Army`. Native officers were given commissioned after First World War. Indian Army had its own commander in chief; there was some discrepancy among the allowances of both armies. It was in 1907 that a new corps was raised known as frontier Corps mainly responsible for the Western Frontiers of India & British India. Ironically there were few princely states on the western frontiers they included Kashmir in the north followed by Nigar, Hunza, Tangrel, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Amb, Tank and Kalat in south. A new concept of military was introduced comprising of Militia, Levies, Scouts, Rifles, Border Military police supported by regular army.

Politically the administration was run on bureaucratic system with precise instructions and protocols to follow. The officers who were inducted in the district administration were either inducted directly through the competitions or from regular army; again either on recommendations or through examination. These officers were allowed to retain their army ranks and were also allowed to automatically enhance their prefixes of rank in accordance with the routine promotion of officers in army. Thus Major General Sikander Mirza one of the very first Indian to receive his commission from Sandhurst in 1920 was inducted in foreign service and posted as political agent when he was captain but despite remaining in civil service he still changed his rank when ever his seniority was promoted in army, he finally became a defence secretary of Pakistan in 1952 and then a governor general and finally he took oath as the first president of Pakistan in 1956. Suzerainty over British India & India from 1857 onwards rested with the crown Queen Victoria was proclaimed as Empress of India in 1876 followed by King –Emperor Edward VII, the title Emperor was meant for India.

Princely states were organized into presidency {Madras} Residency {Kashmir, Deccan} and agency. These state agencies dealt with the princely states, the North Western Frontier States Agency looked after the princely states on North western frontier, down below was the Baluchistan Agency which had the {Kalat, Khairpur, Las Bela, Makran}. One distinct feature of this western frontier was the creation of political agencies on the same footing as for princely states to deal with the tribes, who hitherto never had any central authority to submit. Political agent in these tribal agencies had the same position as other political agents rather they were the pick of the pick, personally interviewed by the viceroy which mainly was in the form of the evening tea with viceroy and vicereine.

This whole composition and relation between the princes and suzerain remained as per royal protocol based upon century old customs. Ironically the layout of the states was such that British India did not have any direct contact with the Afghanistan, Iran and China. The tribes inhabiting these tracts were free men in every sense. They were not savage like the African tribes with whom the white men first had contact. The tribes on the eastern frontier were different in every sense from the western tribes separated by a thousand miles. The eastern frontier was jungle with Burma as the neighbor, weather tropical with torrential rainfall, swamps and weather based water channels, jungle full of wild life. How civilization penetrated is still a mystery as when they were discovered they were living and are still living in the old Dravidian jungle way of life. Humid weather gave them dark skin, short height, fragile body and a culture basing upon nudity. Burma was eventually annexed with British India after the Anglo-Burmese wars

## Chitral Scouts

Chitral Scouts {CS} were raised in 1903 on the recommendation of the political agent Captain McMahan. At that time Chitral, Drosh, Chakdara, Malakand, Drazinda and Jandola in South Waziristan were the only places in agencies where there were British regular army battalions stationed. That speaks itself of the importance of the Chitral, Dir and Swat agency. This agency differs from others in many ways, its importance was not due to its militant culture rather due to the Russian threat. The strength of British garrison at Chitral had been reduced to one infantry battalion along with sappers and a section of artillery. This strength remained at Chitral till 1942.

Chitral State Scouts were raised as classical militia; comprised entirely of local population which will trained only for two months a year and rest of year perform their normal task. This is what Machiavelli had propounded in 15<sup>th</sup> century and it was adopted in Chitral in entirety.

Strength was 1200, which means that this number will be given training, they were called for training and manning of post in batches of two hundred for a duration of two months each year. They were provided with Martin Snider rifles but were not allowed to take home, two British officers remained in command. Headquarters were at Drosh where a fort was constructed. Pay and allowances were shared by the political agent and the Mehtar. Shuja Ul Mulk was also installed as the honorary commandant of Chitral State Scouts, Shuja remained in this honorary position till 1936 when he died after a rule of 41 years. Thus his stint as honorary colonel commandant spans over 33 years the longest in Pakistan's military history. It is a continuity of history that traditionally the Mehtar is installed as the honorary colonel commandant, in present day Chitral Scouts as well, presently ..... is the colonel commandant. This CSS acted more as a border police than as a militia however its primary task was to protect the British officials at Chitral who were acting as a listening post. Mehtar meanwhile initiated a programme of openness; he was invited and visited Calcutta in 1899, at Peshawar vice regal's Durbar in 1902 and at Coronation Durbar at Delhi in 1903. Mastuj and upper Chitral including Laspur and Yarkhun was made part of Chitral territory with Mehtar entering into a pact with the natives in 1909.

On raising the initial batch of scouts were given extensive training in drill for which the drill instructors from the regular British army unit stationed at Chitral were borrowed. Firing was the main thrill for the recruits if they can be call recruits. Air was informal and so was the routine. Polo was a major attraction in the evening when the scouts would show their prowess. Watching them play polo was a treat and lesson in war itself, fearless gallops after a ball the control over the ponies and coordination between the hand and eye while galloping speaks volumes of military traits; it was a question of only harnessing these.

### **Chitral Annual Relief- 1904**

Since the 1895 the regular British battalions were stationed at Chitral their annual relief is part of classic military history. Regiments stationed as far as Bangalore were moved to Chitral. Some regiments were required to adopt route march till a railhead and then to Nowshera, where as the relieved battalions had to march from Drosh till Nowshera. In most of the cases the relieved battalions were stationed at Abbottabad after their tenure at Chitral. The Peshawar Division was responsible for the conduct with general officer commanding required to be physically present at Chakdara for the whole duration which took ten days both ways. Political agent of Swat, Malakand &

Chitral was responsible for the local provisions of grain. Ice camps were also established on the advice of medical officers. Scale of ration and equipment was also altered; for troops going to Chitral were authorized to have three pair of shoes and two pair of socks, importantly great coat was also issued individually otherwise at normal stations they were authorized 33 coats in one infantry company. Followers were also allowed to have 20 seers of luggage and they were issued one pair of socks apart from the No.3 Shoe.

British garrison which was stationed at the Chitral amounted to two infantry regiments, , one company of miners and sappers, one section of two guns. A line of communication was opened from Mardan through Malakand, Chakdara, Dir via Lowari to Drosh; it was the responsibility of Khan of Dir to keep it open in his area for which he was given subsidy as well. Dir Levies were raised in 1897 for this purpose they were under command of the Khan of Dir. Similarly levies were also raised at Malakand known as Malakand Levies. This garrison was annually relieved utilizing this route. It was only in 1936 that the first ever relief using motor vehicles was utilized, the road from Chakdara was vastly improved by then still Lowari had to be crossed on foot. RAF from 1929 onwards started providing air lift and in 1937 an aerial relief was carried out in the winter when passes remained close. Chitral Levies initially had to look after the three post namely Ziarat, Mirkhani and Arandu. Initially it was only Drosh which had an airfield it remained operative till mid fifties after which the Chitral kucha strip was made and aircraft started operating at Chitral.

### **Third Afghan War 1918.**

The war itself was not focused on Chitral sector, this sector differs from all others in a sense that it is inhabited by non pathan tribes who do not share the common language with rest of combatants of the war. However purely from military geography the Amir Amanullah of Afghanistan had much more chances of success here in Chitral than anywhere else. Chitral in the summer of 1914 was a peaceful garrison, the lone infantry regiment was stationed at Drosh, Chitral Scouts itself had only one company in the summer to train with or for manning of the posts. May has been a month of almost all major events in subcontinent thus it was in May 1914 that Amir Amanullah broke his relations with British India because it had delayed in accepting his kingship and more so politically to have the public support in his favour which is so vital in country like Afghanistan and what better way than to have Jihad; tribes became electric with the prospect of an all out war against the infidel British. Mehtar of Chitral also received one such firman from Amanullah on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1914 through the military governor of Afghan Asmar province Brigadier Muhammad Usman Khan; Mehtar Shuja Ul Mulk rejected the offer and kept his side of pact with the British intact. It was a very wise step of diplomacy. Afghanistan after 1893 had carried out an all out massacre of the Red Kafir or Broghul driving them into the Chitral Kafiristan. Majority of the kafirs had accepted Islam and were known as sheikhs moreover the Kafiristan itself became Nuristan in Afghanistan. The war bugle was sounded and Chitral prepared itself for an attack of Afghanistan.

Chitral Garrison comprised of 1/11<sup>th</sup> Rajputana Regiment with 450 bayonet strength it was commanded by Lieutenant colonel F.C.S. Samborne who was also the commander of all armed forces in Chitral which comprised apart from his regiment, a company of sappers and section of guns ex 23 mountain battery, along with 1000 scouts of Chitral; they had been called up for the service. Chitral State scouts were being commanded by Capatin Crimmin with Lieutenant byres as the sole British officer.

Chitral was divided into eight districts each under an 'aatlique' responsible for collection of revenues and also head of the local scouts, it was his responsibility to collect the men for training and sent them to the Drosh. Under every aatlique there was a 'charwelo' responsible for a group of villages within a valley, each village itself had the Baramush the head. It was the Baramush who was the first ladder of the Chitral State Scouts organization. Now these aataliques gathered the trained men. Chitral Scouts were under the political command of assistant political agent Major N.F. Reilly who started mobilizing on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1919.

Company of scouts was initially deployed at Galapach six miles downstream of Mirkani, aim was to keep an eye on the Arandu pass. Mehtar on the other hand had sent his various sons along with his body guards on various passes also. Initial Afghan movement started from 12<sup>th</sup> May onwards, they captured Arandu and soon the Scouts position at Galapach was over run by 600 strong afghans, scouts retreated to Mirkani. Afghans were certainly moving forward with an aim to capture the Mirkani and close the Lowari Pass.

### **Clash at Mirkani.**

On 14<sup>th</sup> May Major Reilly along with two companies of Chitral State Scouts arrived at Mirkani from Drosh. The retreating scouts were also harnessed and together these three companies put up a courageous attack on the Galapach position and reoccupied it; fighting continued the whole day. In another classical display of fighting the scouts along with 50 men of Mehtar bodyguard under command Major Reilly put up another attack on the Kauti feature which was across the river and source of permanent irritation for the Galapach position the objective was achieved with in hours on 16<sup>th</sup> May. Afghan strength at Arandu was estimated to be over 600 supported by four artillery guns and a large tribal lashkar, apart from Arandu the afghans were in control of Bashgal and Birkot valleys

On 21<sup>st</sup> May 1919 in the overall plan the one company of Chitral Scouts were amalgamated with the Mehtar's bodyguard in an attack on the above mentioned positions. Two companies of Chitral Scouts under command Lieutenant Byres of Scouts pressed forward on the right bank and two companies on left bank under their commandant. Subsequently Byres moved forward, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May he had a temporary bridge thrown over the river in which the scouts were expert in doing so, Byres moved ahead to face Afghans at Darshot but to his dismay they had vacated the posts before his arrival.

### **Battle of Birkot 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1919.**

Almost entire British garrison at Chitral was present at the battle of Birkot, a small town inside the Afghan province of Asmar where the bulk of Afghans were concentrated. Battle opened up on 23<sup>rd</sup> May at 0700 hours with own artillery opening up, the Rajputana and Chitral Scouts carried out the advance and by 1400 hours the Afghans started retreating from Arandu. Afghan resisted was mainly in the form of sniping. Chitral scouts lost eight men and another 23 were wounded. After the action the afghans started reinforcing themselves thus the political administration of Chitral very wisely decided to retreat back into own areas thus the two companies of Chitral State Scouts were left at Mirkani Fort and remainder took position inside Drosh Fort along with other elements. On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1919 the armistice was signed between the British India and Afghan government. However the situation at Chitral remained precarious with Afghan General Wakil Khan planning to move into the Chitral thus two companies of Scouts and few men of Mehtar bodyguards were stationed at Ayun and one company was also sent to Lotkoh valley. On 17<sup>th</sup> July 1919 an Afghan attack came upon Bambouret Valley via Zanol Pass and advanced to a mile of the Bambouret Village. Afghans had a complete control of all passes starting from Zidig Pass in the north to the Brambolu Pass in the south. Lowari Pass was also threatened



by 500 odd Afghan tribesmen with menacing posture towards the Ziarat post. Lieutenant Byres with two companies of Chitral Scouts physically attacked this conglomeration of tribesmen and pushed them back. The situation in Chitral started coming back to normalcy after signing of the treaty at Rawalpindi on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1919; thus ended the first blood of Chitral State Scouts from which it emerged as a victor. Three scouts were awarded with posthumous award of Indian Order of Merit, one with Military Cross, one with distinguished Service Order and two each with Indian Distinguished Service Medal and Title of Khan Sahib.

More importantly the concept of Scouts in Chitral so different from the other militias proved a success. Unlike North Waziristan Militia and South Waziristan Militia along with Khyber Rifles where mass defection took place, there was not even one defection among the ranks of CSS. Being entirely composed of one qaum it had its own advantages which proved so good in this conflict.

### **Reorganization 1930.**

. Chitral State Scouts had strength of four and half companies at the beginning of 1930. Pay in 1930 was as follow, a Subedar was getting Rs 50/ per month where as a Havildar was getting rs15/, a Naik Rs 12/ and sepoy rs 10/per month. Ration allowance was given at a rate of Rs 9/ pm, the subedar major apart from his pay was given an annual allowance of Rs 25/. Clerk was a highly paid trade with a pay of Rs 120 per month, armourer was paid Rs 45, religious teacher was getting Rs 10, and gardener was being paid Rs 9 per month. The strength of Chitral Scouts was as follow, eight subedars, 32 havildars, 32 naiks, 64 lance naiks and 736 sepoy. There were four chowkidars as well who were being paid at Rs 15 per month, there was a pupil teacher also.

The nomenclature of the Chitral State Scouts was changed into Chitral Scouts in 1928, it was not merely a change of name but it also encompassed financial effects. The Mehtar who was knighted after the third Anglo-Afghan War, his subsidy was also increased and above all he was entitled to 11 gun salute now. British thus in an effort to lessen the financial burden upon the state undertook the proposal to reorganize the Chitral Scouts in this background. There were 9 companies of Chitral Scouts at the end of the 1919 but these were gradually reduced and by 1930 there were six companies which were further reduced to 4 companies under the Chitral Scouts name. The reduction was carried out after a detailed study. Each company had four platoons with two subedar, eight havildars, eight naiks and 200 temporarily naiks or soldiers. Thus each subedar to command two platoons or half company with a havildar designated as platoon commanders. The subedar and havildar were bound to undergo one additional month of training apart from the one month which they were supposed to undertake with their company. Each company itself to undergo one month training. On the financial side a reduction of 109 men all ranks was carried out. Companies were named as Lasper Mulikho company, Turikho company, Mastuj company, Kuff Company and Lutkoh half company.

Chitral retained its strategic position, in 1936 the Gilgit agency was leased over by the British India from the Kashmir state for a period of sixty years. Gilgit Scouts thus came under the control of Frontier Corps and a greater interaction took place between the Chitral Scouts and Gilgit Scouts. The annual Shandur polo tournament was basically a clash between these two rival scouts outfits.

A road was greatly improved between the Chakdara and motor transport was used for annual relief till Dir. Commander in Chief paid a visit to the Chitral and Chitral Scouts in 1936. The road move was a tedious and dangerous maneuver with constant air support and piqueting of the route. Dir Levies were up to the task. Air relief was carried in the winter of 1936-37 when aircraft taking off from Risalpur would land at Drosh within an hour. Heavy pieces of artillery were flown from Rawalpindi which

included 3.7inch howitzer. For seven years Mehtar Nasir ul Mulk reigned Chitral and in his tenure the Chitral opened up a little bit towards the Afghanistan in terms of timber trade.. Mehtar was an enlighten ruler having served with a British regiment for an year , he was the ideal; he politically united Chitral with Dir by marrying the daughter of Nawab of Dir. Mehtar Nasir ul Mulk was given the honorary rank of major in the British Indian army.

### **1943**

In 1942 the last of British soldier left the Chitral for they were required at more important places due to fortunes of second great war which at time was placed heavily against the British. The strength of Chitral scouts was increased to 10 companies with an addition of one section of 2.75 inch Vickers machine gun. The strength was first increased from four companies to six in 1935. More importantly the scouts now came under the control of Frontier Corps for technical purposes. The political agent of Dir, Swat & Chitral Agency still retained their control but now the posting of officers became a FC affair rather than an military. The first fruit of this was the training of Chitral Scouts troops on the machine gun which was provided by the instructors from Tochi & SWS ; moreover native officers of Chitral scouts had to spend three months either at Tochi or at SWS to learn the fine tricks of frontier warfare . Overall the Chitral Scouts still retained their individual flavor from the other corps of FC; they maintained their one qaum recruitment and also the unique system of mobilization and one month training.

### **1947.**

The political history of Gilgit and Chitral is almost interwoven, in 1947 when the question of accession of states to Pakistan arise there was a feeling among the ruling elite of Chitral to be interlink with Afghanistan more than with Pakistan basing upon the geography but the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1947 plan had left no option to the states but to choose either between the India or Pakistan. Mehtar Muzafur ul Mulk .. had good relations with Quaid and Chitral acceded to Pakistan in August 1947; Gilgit had a different story. Mehtar Muzaaf ul Mulk died in 1948 and his son Saif ur Rehman who was already recognized as the Mehtar by the British India took over. It is worth noting that almost all the mehtars{ Shuja ul Mulk, Amin ul Mulk} had the Afghan bloodline running from their mother side. Saif's mother herself was daughter of an afghan refugee. Let it not be forgotten that all mehtars trace their lineage to Sangin Ali a Persian thus the Persians cultural influence is even to day visible in the form of courtesies.

Chitral sate was in almost chaos after the death of the Mehtar Muzafar, traditional plots to snatch the power were put into lay. Mehtar Saif himself is partially responsible for the anarchy that ensued. In April 1949 the bulk of administration including the wazir-e-azam , commander in chief and chief secretary were all arrested and properties confiscated. This was a real crisis for Pakistan as Afghanistan was always ready to exploit any weakness in the frontier states.. By September 1949 the crisis were over with the intervention of political agent Malakand.

In **October 1949** crisis of another kind erupted when the marriage party from dir which had come to take the bride; daughter of late Mehtar Nasir ul Mulk as per earlier agreement. They were informed by the Mehtar Saif Ur Rahman that he himself has married the lady in June 1949 but did not disclosed to the people; this set the stage for a civil war between the Dir and Chitral. Saif was later evacuated by air from Chitral and sent to Lahore to undergo training in civil services academy. It is worth mentioning that he had already received the military training from Pakistan Military Academy in 1948. The state was now put under a board of directors' with assistant political agent as head. Chitral at that time had governors in what are tehsils now. There was a governor at Drosh another at Mastuj

under the accession of 1947 the states retained their administrative set up as it was before accession. Saif later had a tragic end, he died in an air crash over Lowari in 1954 while he was coming to Chitral after years of wandering; all due to one fatal mistake of heart. He was succeeded by his four year old son Saif ul Mulk with political agent Malakand as the regent. This royalty was finally abolished by President Zulfikar Bhutto in April 1972 when government abolished all such titles and privy purses. Just for historical fact the India had abolished all these princely states privileges under Indira Gandhi in 1971. Presently the Mehtar is a traditional title which people generally respect in the valley. Mehtar is presently living in the old fort on the banks of river Chitral.

### **The Kashmir Operations of 1948**

Soon after independence, the force was called upon to move and stabilise the situation in Guraiz (Astore Sector) and Skardu valleys where Gilgit Scouts under command Col. Hassan Gilgiti was retreating. The enemy had made considerable advance across Burzil Pass. Chitral Scouts relieved Gilgitis in Kamri and Domel Sectors. Some of the posts established by Chitral Scouts in Shaqma Sector are still known as Chitrali-1 - Chitrali-2 and Chitral Soon (Tower). Chitral Lashkar under command Capt. Mata-UI-Mulk moved to Skardu viz Deossai plains and facilitated the capture of Skardu. During this battle 2x3.7" How sent by Mehtar of Chitral were used. The Lashkar also succeeded in capturing 250 POWs including an Indian Lieutenant Colonel Sher Jang Thapa.

Asmat wali's diary. Nursing assistant baba Asmat wali died in 1988, he took part in Kashmir Jihad of 1948, more importantly he left a diary of the account. Distance from Chitral to Kamri was 420 miles which they covered in 38 days, Asmat on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1948 notes in his diary 'saw Pakistan currency at a shop, Government of Pakistan was written on the currency note'. He also notes down the change of command at Gilgit Scouts where Lieutenant Colonel Abdullah Jan was transferred and Major Tufail took over the command of Gilgit Scouts. Asmat also mentions the Indian counterpart Colonel Suba Lal Chand who according to him was a shrewd man. But the most touching part of his diary is the account of an old woman in Mimni Merg, a rich widow who sacrificed over twenty five goats for the scouts in four months for the scouts because they were extremely short on ration'. Asmat when arrived back as victor to his native town in November 1949 came to know that he had lost his sister in his absence she had died almost immediately when he had left for Jihad but her mother intentionally did not let pass the information to him.

### **His Highness Colonel Muttah ul Mulk, Victor of Skardu.**

Gilgit after the freedom act of Gilgit Scouts was still under the threat of the Dogra forces stationed at Skardu and Leh. There was a company strength at Skardu under Captain Parbat Singh as a reinforcement to the Dogra Battalion, another Dogra officer Captain Kishen Singh was holding the Tsari Pass the mouth leading to the Skardu along the Indus going upstream. Brigadier Faqir Singh was the overall commander with headquarters at Kargil.

## **1956**

Amidst such chaotic environment the training and standards of the scouts were bound to drop. The scouts all belong to the same area and ethnicity; thus palace revolts had their impact on them. Gasht and long gasht were thus a valuable mean to keep the scouts busy. By 1956 they were organized into two wings known as **left and right wing**, the scouts were now permanent body. The normal gasht was of two days and long gasht spans over ten days. Each post was supposed to have eight gasht per month

each ranging no less than 15 miles. Method of recruitment was simple, adjutant would inform the Wazir-e-Azam of the deficiency in manpower. Chief secretary was in fact known as Wazir e Azam , thus he would in turn inform or order the ‘hakims’ the village headmen , who would direct the desirous young boys for recruitment. The physical standards were; age no less than 17 years, height 5.6 inches, weight 120 pounds and chest expansion of 30-32 inches.. Recruits training duration extended to 36 weeks and conducted at Drosh. There was a permanent corps drill staff comprising of one jemadar adjutant, one corps havildar, three drill naiks and 5 drill lance naiks. For night training all ranks used to wear the boot made of skin{Kun}. At quarter guard the usual strength at day was two by six and at night two by twelve scouts. There were three quarter guards, one at Chitral , other at Drosh and one at Arandu. Drosh had an additional responsibility as well they daily had to provide a mail guard of two scouts for the protection of mail from Drosh – Mirkani.

A soldier had to be a first class shot., having a certificate of 3<sup>rd</sup> class education, should have passed the senior sepoy promotion examination and above all recommended by his wing commander, only then he was considered for promotion. Troops had a good ration , they were issued with meat thrice a week , they were entitled 11 chattaks of atta, half chattak of ghee and one chattak of daal daily. A special allowance known as khowar was admissible to the officers after they have passed the language, it valued at Rs 100 per month.

### **1965 War**

Chitral Scouts were bit late in taking part in the war, the two companies of Chitral scouts were ordered to move to the operational area in the second week of war and by the time these two companies reported at Rawalpindi on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1965 the war was over. These two companies remained deployed at Rawalpindi where the threat of air borne troops from India were a distant reality. Subedar Suleman Khan was the commander of Chitral Scouts contingent, they remained at Rawalpindi till the last week of January.

### **1971 War**

The situation in the former East Pakistan was getting deteriorated every day and new raisings were ordered by the government. In November 1971 the commandant Lieutenant colonel Afzal in a darbar updated the scouts with the situation and ask for volunteers , four scouts namely Havildar Sarfraz Shah alias Khamshay of Laspur, Naik Nasir Shah Bang{ Yarkhun }, Naik Qadeer Khan Raman{Laspur} and Naik Khush Ahmed Khan {Murkhow} stood up and volunteered themselves. Commandant in recognition of their patriotism promoted all these scouts to next rank before their move to the headquarters Frontier Corps. All these four sons of Chitral scouts were later made prisoner of war after the fall of Dacca on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1971. They were repatriated under the Delhi agreement {Simla} of 18<sup>th</sup> August 1973 but were able to join back with their families in December 1974. Among these Naib Subedar Sarfraz Shah Khamshay was able to air his interview through All India Radio in which he highlighted that they are being treated well and according to the Geneva Convention ‘I am fine and life inside the prison is also fine’. In the end he remarked in Khowar language ‘*Gooshkoo Moraian Zannan Soureein*’ which is a Chitral proverb meaning ‘everything said and heard is false’. This seems to be the yard stick for history of Chitral as well.

Apart from these four scouts more than 140 other scouts from Chitral took part in the 1971 War on Western front at Kargil Sector. They remained at Kargil for over two years, another batch of 40 scouts performed duty at Rawalpindi garrison.

## Kafiristan- Kalash & Bashgol

The Kafirs of Hindukush are the only physical evidence of Chitral's past. The 3000 odd Kafir living on the southern bank of River Chitral in three thickly vegetated valleys with pine, walnut, oak, maple trees; the entrance to these valleys is through a narrow gorge, are an enigma. Tribe still following pagan rites despite being so close to civilisation. They are not man eaters and neither roam in loin clothes, detest violence and generally remains merry. It seems as if they have been living in such remote, inaccessible valley since the time immortal. They at one time between 1000-1500 AD were powerful rulers of Kafiristan {Chitral} the very name Kafiristan was given by the Arabs to the area east of Badakshan {present day Chitral, & Nuristan province of Afghanistan} . The Kafirs had two main classification, the Red Kafir lived in the more fertile Western Kafiristan - Bash Gol { gol is the common name for a stream, the valley takes its name from the stream which takes origin from Shah Salim Pass in north } and Kalash the Black Kafir or Sia Posh occupied the Eastern Kafiristan. They established the first Aryan kingdom, the passage of Aryans moving down from the high north took place through this geographical corridor {Bash Gol-Chitral- Kunar}. The Red Kafir were the ruling class the true Aryans and black kafirs were the result of intermarriages and working class. **In 13<sup>th</sup> Century** a Kalash ruler Bulesingha was defeated and driven away from upper Chitral by the Rais , a century later Rajawai the last of Kalash ruler was defeated by the Muslims { Mehtar of Chitral }. Kafiristan retained its identity and Emperor Babur acknowledges it in his 1529 AD autobiography, Emperor Babur was aware of the presence of Kafirs when he first occupied Kabul.

World first came to know about them in 1885- 89 when first the British military commission reconnoitred the valley and later Major Surgeon George Robertson spent almost two years among these Kafir and wrote about them . Robertson thus stands as the pioneer explorer of Chitral , however he stayed with the Bash Gol area Kafirs who are termed as Red Kafirs. Durand Line affected the Kafirs most and more than any other tribe. Being non violent in nature they only had the geography as their best defence and now this was demarcated. Not that it matters on ground but in a broad term it took away the support of Mehtar from them as Chitral under Durand Pact was obliged not to interfere in internal Afghan matters and vice versa.

**In 1895** the Afghans carried out a Jihad against the Kafirs, either accept Islam, fight or pay tribute. Kafirs in the past have been a popular commodity as slaves for the Afghans. Kafir's heartland is Bash Gol valley; the valley between River Chitral on north and Bash Gol in south, it is only at Chitral that area is bit plain. Resultantly the surviving Kafirs now inhabit the three ancient valley, Bhamboret, Birir and Rumbur however in the end they were almost exterminated in 1895 but managed to hold on to a narrow strip of land in lower Chitral. Majority of these Kafir embraced Islam and are known as sheikhs in society. *' Some twelve miles south of Chitral city and west of Chitral River, there lies the entry to the gorge , between the high and rocky cliffs, the gorge slopes gently upwards, fanning out into a number of smaller valleys and it is in these valleys that the last surviving Kafirs dwell'*, commented by Chitral Scouts

commandant, Lieutenant Colonel Afzal in 1972. Afzal was privileged to witness the culture so close, last one to do so was Major Robertson in 1889; Afzal has highlighted the Kalash Kafirs whereas Robertson had highlighted Red Kafirs. There are three main valleys, Rumbir which is closest to Chitral in the south, Bambouret is adjacent to it and Birir further south almost opposite Drosh. All are on the right bank of River Chitral and in a crescent manner occupies all area south, of Chitral.

*‘ Kafir tribe is a highly mixed people, i was struck on more than one occasion at finding a village where tall men with fair hair or light brown hair with pale blue eyes and a shorter type with black hair and olive skin existed side by side.... members of better classes showed signs of Aryans breeding in their good features ...a village chief in Bhumbirit told me ‘our elders told me that our ancestors came from Iran and Greece.....An elderly farmer in Birir valley told me that their ancestors came from Siam’.*

Very little is known about Kafir religion and rituals. *‘ Their original faith is a rather low form of idolatry, admixture of fire and ancestor worship. Imra is the supreme creator supported by a host of lesser deities; Giriz, Moni, Bagiz, Dizma, Krumai, Nirmali and others. Giz was the principal hero a virile warrior god. Kafirs believe in supernatural fairies known as Deo-Log, evil spirits is known as Shitan...one has to go high in mountains to invoke good fairies, the evil lives everywhere. Kafirs believe in hell and heaven known as baishat and dozegh respectively. Two particular divinities Mahandeo and goddesses Jestak { six feet high and eighteen inches broad wooden black plank} are held high in Bumboret valley . Fundamental ritual act in Kafir worship is the sacrifices of domestic animals, a proper sacrifice requires properly lit fire at altar. Few branches of Juniper are thrown into flames with occasion twigs of holly oak, walnut or almond are also used; meat is distributed among the worshippers’.*

**Marriage** an ancient social custom is celebrated in temple ‘ Jestak- Aan’ by Kafirs. Bride and bridegroom enters the temple led by a goat, the goat is alter sacrificed by a boy virgin’ on Jesta Mosh’ , who later sprinkles some blood of animal on the Jestak as well. Bride has to eat five bread cakes before they are declared as husband and wife. Death rites are also conducted at Jestak-Aan, corpse is palced in arough wooden coffin with a loose lid. For two days and nights the friends and relatives of the deceased stay at temple , eating and drinking, performing ceremonial dances around coffin, singing and dancing, in case of female dead body there no dance but singing. The religious priest is the most important person in the village, known as Shamman. He is an orator and performer as he has to perform religious rites in a opera manner. He creates hypnotic sensations around himself. Kafirs do not bury their dead, the coffin is left in open with stone lids on top at ‘ Maahan da Jao’ {place of many coffins}. Giz is n red Kafir feminine deity protector of home, family and the private life, pregnancy, birth, children, love, marriages, sickness. In the Black Kafir valleys Sajigor,Jatz, Prebal and Warin does the same task. Rich Kafirs do erect the effigies made in wood over the coffins of beloved one. It is no more in use as old sculptors have died and so has the craft also. Kafirs of Birir valley are more orthodox and follow the customs more religiously, In 1971 there were only 2000 Kafirs living in Birir valley alone. ‘Kafirs of Rumbir and Bambouret valley are beginning to give up some of their ancient customs and traditions’; they now dig graves for

their dead. Orthodox do not send their children to school and neither entertain tourist as house guest.

**Kafir women** still stroll the Chitral bazaar wearing colourful attire hardly anyone can point out a Kafir man as he wears no distinct dress item. Women young and old all dress alike, a long black woollen gown 'Sangachs' tied in the waist with a woollen sash either white or light grey. On the head is 'Kopesi' an ornamental cap, heavily decorated with several rows of cowrie shells, hair most elaborately dressed in long and thin plaits. Kafirs do not poultry meat and considers it impure.<sup>11</sup> Kafirs are fond of music but use only drums of various size and types, motly women dances and men occasionally joins in 'The dancing party consisted of of all ages groups, young girls, withered old women and mere children...they formed up into groups of four or five each girl with her left arm around the waist of other girl to her left and her right arm across the shoulders of her partner on the right..cross and circles in a series of complicated patterns, displaying skills and natural elegance, rhythm kept by a seemingly wordless song with monotonous sound, from time to time we could hear the sharp and hollow thump of a big drum'.<sup>12</sup> There are three types of dances among Kafirs irrespective of occasion{death or marriage} and are performed simultaneously one after the other. First is known as Dosha, second as Drazhailak and last one as Cha. Kafir is a female dominated tribe, women do not observe purdah, remarkable number of women have chestnut ahir with percentage having blue eyes, they are forbidden to enter the sanctuaries of god except on special occasions, even the normal religious rites have preference to men.. They ae not allowed to keep comb in the house rather leave it under a stone near a water stream, they set their hair after three days. During menstruation period women are segregated from the community for five or six days in a special house 'Bashaleni', every fair size village have one. Uncooked food is left on a stone opposite the Basha leni and one of the inmates comes out and collects it. If for any reason any women from outside has to go inside bashaleni then she has to strip anked before entering it and on coming out has to take a complete bath. Three main festivals of Kalash are Jyoshi {Chilimjuich} in May and last for three days. Women and girls agther flower and decoratteir houses, sheep and goats are sacrificed, dancing and wine drinking goes in on in every house, milk is sprinkled over goddesses Jestak. Porh is celebrated in September and Chownas {chittermas}

**Shekhandeh**, these are converts from Kafir religion into the folds of Islam willingly. They constitute almost 1.5% of Chitral population. They are settled in Bhumbirit, Birir upper valleys like Langurbat and Jinjerait. They are also immigrants from Afghanistan, previously they were known as Red Kafir and were living on the western Kafiristan but after the 1895 Jihad majority of them embraced Islam, even now whenever any Kafir accepts Islam he is known as sheikh. Family life is compact and a normal family comprises of 15 odd members including the three generations living together. Male enjoys the polygamy and women works in the field, in short their cultural and social life has not been affected much by change of

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<sup>11</sup>*Chitral & Kafiristan*, Lieutenant Colonel Afzal, 1972, p-82.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p-76

religion. Afghanistan after 1893 had carried out an all out massacre of the Red Kafir or Broghul driving them into the Chitral Kafiristan. Afghanistan after 1893 had carried out an all out massacre of the Red Kafir or Broghuls driving them into the west { Chitral's Kafiristan}. Majority of the kafirs had accepted Islam and are known as sheikhs moreover the Kafiristan itself became Nuristan in Afghanistan

## Chitral Revisited- Chapter IV

### **Chitral Scouts Officers Mess.**

The present day Chitral Scouts Officers Mess is known as Petako Gaz in Chitrali language , it has a history many many years ago thee was a khonza {the royal princess} who came here and left her dupaatta here and when she went back to the palace she remembered her cloak and mentioned it to her attendants and gave the direction to the place as well, in Chitrali language Petako Gaz means a place whee princess forgot her veil. The present location was at one time part of Mehatr's property and even now the national Gol park almost stars from where the mess finishes.

Petako gaz is in almost seven layers or tiers of ground which have been levelled enough to construct the building. The original building of the mess was constructed in 1903 and from then till 1990 it remained in its original shape for the reason that Chitral Scouts itself moved out from here and established headquarter at Drosh and it was only in 1995 that they came back to this Mess again. Many additions have been carried out but the original design has been left intact, credit goes to the commandants for maintaining the original layout which is more or less like Swiss dacha .

The most notorious stone on frontier is here the 'laying stone of Captain Boono'. Mess presently has apart from two original gusetrooms known as Birir and Rumbor almost a dozen other guest rooms and living quarters for the adjutant and one wing commander, accommodation for mess staff, signal detachment and security guards. Thee is a diesel generator, one hydel power which was commissioned in August 2013, gymnasium, library and Billiard room. One clay court tennis court at tier two, one squash court at tier three are also there. There is one mosque as well.

Mess have two main halls which are rectangular in design , one si used as dining room and other as ante room having television facility; in old days thee used to be a piano and radio followed by radiogram.

In 2002 the guest room charges were rupees 200 per night for lieutenant colonels and above and rupees 150/ night for all others while on leave at Chitral Mess. Mess in order to maintain its decorum usually bans the entrance of children under twelve on official functions. Chitral Scouts have one peculiar issue almost all their official inspection and tour takes place in summer time mainly due to



blocking of road movement in winter thus they have heavy load of guests in summer therefore it is always advisable to have advance booking here.

## September 5<sup>th</sup> 2013- Major Langlands School .

I am back to Chitral Scouts and Chitral once again; this time the circumstances are different, I came here primarily because I got a text from Carey Schoffield who is the principal of Major Langland School at Chitral and I had met her once in the last visit and quite impressed with her efforts , academic credentials{ Oxford & Cambridge} and above all her personality she is in mid fifties but quite attractive and I think she thinks and acts like a Victorian era lady but it suits her. To my mind she fulfils the empty and void of Frontier where so far no lady has made her marks in a more dignified manner

Any way I got from the Landi Kotal with the commandant Khyber Rifles and then got hold of a taxi {fare 9500rupees} but for a noble cause it is worth it. Driver an Afghan Sameen , well by dinner time we were at the Chitral Mess passing through the Malakand and crossed Lowari Top , weather was good and road also good. Security on road is appreciable. I remember meeting two havildar of 31 Baluch at the base of Lowari, and I am motivated by his words ‘ that our forefathers sacrificed their lives so I can be free today , now it is my turn’. The excitement of coming day was intense , I was constantly sending the messages to Carey informing about my location , she invited me for breakfast next day. I made a commitment with the driver to pick me up next day at 0630 hours , but neither he came nor the waiter brought my clothes from ironing, in the end I got the clothes and got hold of a new taxi and managed to reach the Hindukush heights by 0720 , five minutes late.

In the school it was opposite to my expectations but good, I had to give a five minute talk to the school in the assembly , I did by getting on to the flag post and speaking in loud but powerful voice, telling the boys how important freedom is , why we are celebrating defence day, the nobility of the profession of soldiering and so on , later I sang the national anthem with them and then realized that these boys are in fact keeping words with me and very few know the national anthem {same as in our school days}. Then the day was spent with the teachers, giving talks to three classes one by one, tea with school staff and another talk with Carey mostly about Alvi's death circumstances. I drove with her to the hotel and realized that she wants me to go back without having lunch, but I just wanted to say hello to Major Siraj . I realized that probably Carey did not want me to meet the Siraj , may be it is my own mind but I could feel something in the air. I did not had the breakfast so when I was invited by Carey for lunch I accepted it, another person Mr Arif Habib also joined in he had arrived just today {5<sup>th</sup> September} and seems to be old acquaints of Carey because she had embraced him although only customarily but she did and she did not did that with me. Anyway lunch was ok , I don't like the food in Chitral after the food of Khyber. Moreover I have noticed that these Chitralis are less hospitable than the Khyberis. I just talk about history and realized that Carey has very little knowledge about it , her field is English anthology { I have made a note to ask what is it}. But by and large Carey is a respectful person and I admire her being here in Chitral , I have always considered her since I have met her to be a Victorian era romantic mem sahibha. Her transport dropped me at the Chitral Mess. I am conscious of petrol prices and as such don't like being dropped or picked by Carey's vehicle but irony is that I can go there at hotel in a taxi {fare rupees 800} but there is no such thing to come back thus by force I have to accept it.

**Friday**

Well the actual defence day is today and I managed to reach the Chitral Scouts fort in their vehicle although I missed the vehicle taking the adjutant Major Kazmi, it was nice to see him, commandant is new but he had gone to Mirkhani for reconnaissance and conference. Chitral Scouts look good in their headgear of local cap with plume. I sat in adjutant office and same mental frustration which seems to be the hall mark of the Chitral Scouts, 'sir commandant is away and when he will come only then we can extend help in history data' nothing wrong with this sentence but I know the background so I just sat quietly hearing what all is going around. Almost all officers were sitting there Captain Nazar of 148 AD he is from Gilgit, Captain Hamdan is from Guides he has been promoted since our last meeting and a real good officer, the doctor the DDMS. Cup of tea and I was on listening watch, constant telephone rings, constant scouts or subedars marching in, television on mute, mobile.

The issue seems to be the threat of miscreants from across the border, an interception has been made on their communication network along with source report which is the cause of ripple, then a Moulvi has made a speech in mosque calling for elimination of Ismailis from Chitral and he has been called by police, the scouts want him to be put behind bars but police says that there is no such law for this. I recall even in Chaklala garrison last year the Moulvi in the mosque called for action against the shias but nothing was done against him, any action and that Moulvi will become a hero overnight. The army {17 division} is in charge of the district but the problem is that for all practical purpose the district is settled and there is no imposition of any regulations which states that it is under the army thus a great mass of confusion is in the air. There was a small gathering of college boys in front of the deputy commissioner's office protesting for lack of water and electricity in the college, that is the right of the boys and this is what they or every one does in this age but orders going out from the adjutant office was to disperse them immediately before the army headquarters start interfering in it. The two men walked in one was SSP of the city {investigation} and he wanted one of his relative to be discharged from service and adjutant agreed to put up the case to the commandant on his arrival on Monday but warned the individual that he will have to spend few days in scouts jail as well on which the individual agreed.

I gave my camera to the photographer to take pictures, the Bara Khana was at 1230 hours and I was wondering whether I will be allowed or invited in it, with every minute my opinion about the Chitral Scouts was getting worse and worse, it seems that clerks here are very powerful and bit arrogant as well. Well then another message regarding the perceived movement of the miscreants, a lieutenant colonel of military intelligence was also there it was his second day he is from 31 Punjab, a good man, he was also sitting in the office, the news was that some Wazir and Nazir are planning to carry out an attack on the Pakistani post close to Arandu, the weapons have been seen and messages on air confirm it also. Now the Taliban if I can use the word are intelligent enough and at times just by sending false messages they can create a false ripple in the security organizations and unfortunately then all focus gets onto the position mentioned by Taliban in communication and very conveniently the Taliban strike at other place, in my opinion the Ismaili are the target and they live in upper Chitral so let's see what happens. Adjutant then announced to the Subedar Barkat that officers are too committed so they cannot attend the bara khana and therefore their food should be sent to the officers tae bar. I requested adjutant to attend the bara khana as it will allow me to have interaction with scouts; adjutant had no excuse but to allow me.

I was taken by the Subedar Barkat, the tent/qannat was pitched in the western part of the fort, it was still in progress so the BHM took me on around of the area, we went to the JCO's Mess and I had a visit inside, not in a good state, it seems that no one has taken meal here in months or years, same as in Khyber. I met the education JCO who is a n educated person wearing pant/shirt and tie, he has written two books one regarding the women education in Chitral other a novel, I like him he is also the

principal of Chitral public school . He mentioned about one scout who is writing the history of Chitral Scout I was almost immediately keen to meet him but he said he will find it. Bara Khana was an experience and all my apprehensions about Chitral Scouts turned out to be true. No spoons no glasses , a rush on food like Punjabi village wedding scene, nothing militarily about it , reason absence of officers and lack of meat in daily diet; anyway I was genuinely upset with the behaviour.

Back to the office area met the quarter master who asked me whether I am still here since my first visit or have I come again , a good and intelligent question , I remained quiet. Food inside the tea bar was fantastic, same food as in troops table but here it was in abundance and in a manner that it looked nice, I declined to eat as I had taken meal with troops but in my heart of heart I did not liked this gesture of officers to have food separately even on this day, now the jig saw pieces of Chitral Scouts puzzle are getting into places. The adjutant announced that a book has arrived just now which is on Chitral Scouts history, it is the same book which the education JCO was mentioning, I was really excited and it was there in Urdu and a short glance told me it is nothing new from the past data yet two-three incidents are new. Chitral Scouts seems to be having a history of doing mutiny, they did it in 1973 when they were told that other qaums will also be joining the Chitral scouts, they were at Drosh Qila then , Lieutenant Colonel Afzal was the commandant the one who wrote a small pamphlet on Chitral as well, the scouts led by the subedar major then marched from Drosh, occupied Chitral fort and watered the airfield and helipad {polo ground} IGFC Brigadier Naseerullah Babar came from Peshawar and had to stand on the helicopter for negotiations with the scouts. The strategic importance of Chitral with hostile Afghanistan was too immense to take this affair lightly , at the end the scouts won it they signed an agreement with the IGFC with subedar major and the ruling prince as witness under which no other qaum is allowed to serve in Chitral Scouts,' amazing feat.

Next mutiny took place in mid nineties when again the Chitral contingent which was part of a FC Week developed a rift with the wing commander and in the end the contingent was called back to Drosh and court of inquiry conducted and IGFC Major General Ghazi ud Din Rana later gave punishment to over 64 scouts, ranging from seven days to 28 days RI, reduction of ranks, and dismissal from service of the subedar majors. No such steps were taken in 1973. The dismissed subedars later served terms in civil jail and few years later were given the old ranks pension. Now these are rare scenes and unprecedented in nature. It only highlights how important is the subedar major and how vital it is for the officer to keep an eye on the pulse of the things, both mutinies reminds me of Gilgit Rebellion of 1947, almost a replica. In the evening I saw the games of Chitral Scouts and it was only on sports field that one feels good about them. Riding of two horses, Chitral Scouts have horses but no riding school. Cricket and football, people just watching and relaxing, looks very good. I developed bit of respect for them now, got Chitral scouts badges from canteen. On my way back I wanted to get down in the city to buy ink pot but adjutant did not allow me to go walking and made sure the vehicle takes me to bazaar and brings back to mess, a kind gesture. In the bazaar no ink pot, no shop was open due to Friday. Another good aspect is the Pakistan's recovery at Harare in the first test where Younis scored double hundred and saved Pakistan from a defeat.

Later I sent an text to Carey and have yet to receive the answer back , probably another miss text from me. Let's see. I had a good conversation with Lance Naik Nazir the library in charge , he has a master degree in islmayiat and is currently doing bachelor of education, I remember how he traced the missing library books , I like him. He gave me some appears and promised to write more.

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2013, Chitral.**

It is 1930 hours and I am sitting in the library which is one of the best among all the Frontier Corps libraries, I cannot go on without mentioning the Lance Naik Nazir of education corps, a good man and very hospitable he belongs to Sanobar in upper Chitral, Mastuj area, I am going to his village tomorrow to interview an old war veteran of 1948 Kashmir War, initially the programme was today but there are two jeeps which leaves for his village and both had gone to Dir with apples. Thus I will take the jeep for Buni which is the junction of Yarkhun and another river.

In the morning I had the Chitrali shawl which are made here in the scouts own handloom, they are different for male and females, difference mainly in colour, male is brown or khaki and much larger in size, ladies is bit short in length and colours are generally more dark, like red or black. I was excited about them and later the works havildar brought the tailor also who took my measurement and let's see what he makes in the end.

Morning are very pleasant here, chirping of birds, the music of water flowing over the stones, the breeze passing through maple trees and in between all of a sudden the calling voice of peacock, the panic stricken voices of Chinese hen, I have always seen them in pair and always worried like oriental wives. I was given a lead by the havildar regarding the chappal makers by the name of Dardon Khan who had a shop at Drosh as well and here he is located in Ataleeq bazaar.

I walked to the bazaar, Tirich Mir was visible toady but partially, weather hot but I enjoyed the walk, I had the white Chitrali cap on me and it helps in breaking the ice with natives and I found myself walking as I am walking in any where else in world. I passed by the old bags shop, my own bag given for manufacture are not yet ready in Peshawar thus I am looking for a hand bag, I found one antique looking bag and I told him to keep it for me. The chappal maker shop was an hoax as there were ordinary looking chapapls, the owner not present and someone sitting who was absolutely blank about this what I gathered from him was that there are no chappal makers in Chitral. Next target was to find a map of Chitral from Faiz Book store. I took the hidden path behind the main bazaar, passing through village and emerging from the city end, they are in process of erecting and constructing a new bridge over the stream. There seems to be a crowd present all the time on bridge watching this feat. I had to ask many shops regarding the amp before I was able to hit the Faiz Book store but he did not had the map. On my way back I stopped at a dry fruit shop and bought the pea nuts. Wall nuts are very popular here but they will be solid in another two weeks. The major areas are upper Chitral and Kaalsh valleys which have ripe wall nuts which are bigger in size; the size of Chitral wall nuts is rather small. I did went inside the centennial school which was opened up in 1926 by the HH Nasirul Mulk, principal was very kind and took me around the building, the main hall is gracious and spacious, I especially liked the Persian and Iqbal's couplets written on wall. School have a tennis court as well, a tree at the court have a rather unusual plaque which was put inside the trunk of maple tree and today it has been covered by the trunk an unusual sight.

I got my chappal polished from a street vendor and paid him rupees twenty, then bought two books one is the proceedings of third Hindu Kush conference held this year and other an urdu on the life of Nasirul Mulk {1936-1943 ruler}, at times one finds a wealth of information in these local books. Then long up walk back to mess, it is quite a walk and good one. Traffic is not much here yet one gets the smoke of vehicle passing close by and changing gear, air is generally clean and fresh with no odour, streets are clean and very few stray dogs. One sees and notice women walking alone or with a child wearing veil but their eyes are always staring at you, I wear glasses to have a better look at them. Have yet to talk to any lady here other than the Carey Schoffield but natives have own class and charisma, I am more keen in having conversation with a Persian family.

In the mess lawn I had a talk with Nazir and mess JCO about the local food delicacies surprisingly there are no sweet dishes as part of Chitral food culture even the tae consumed in upper Chitral has a salt in it and the popular dish of Kheer has salt too. There are many types of bread here, one having only walnut inside is known as Polai and one having potatoes and wall nut inside the bread is called 'Aalomojhi'. Ghulmandi is another bread in which goat cheese is put inside a bread and then pure ghee or butter is poured after heating over it. Walnut oil is used as a sprinkle over rice to give it an aroma, Chamrogh is the apricot juice in it dry apricot is soaked in water for a day and then filtered with fine cotton cloth and you get only the juice and no pulp of apricot, I have tried it at Skardu only drawback is that apricot initially upset your stomach quite heavily, but in other words it cleans your stomach thoroughly. Shuula is another dish which is a mixture of rice and duck meat. Chitral is famous for its bird shooting and that is why I was curious as how they prepare the shoot meat, but I think they do not bar but the way Afridi or Shinwari do. Chitrali kaalaey is another dish in which small pieces of bread along with Kaveer which is a speciality of Mulkhow area it is like gaarm masala or kalazera of Rattu, it is used in cooking and also as a drink to fight fever, it is grown on ground and have flowers which after drying are stored at present it cost Rupees 400 per kilogram, walnuts are rupees 300 per kilogram.

### **Chitral, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

I have just arrived back from Songohor the village of Lance Naik Nazir, after spending the night there; presently I am in the mess having a cup of tea and enjoying the weather, which has drizzled.

I went yesterday morning at 0900 hours, Nazir went with me to the Adda which is at the end of Shah Bazaar opposite PTDC Motel, the Hiace goes only when it is full, the scouts with me ensured that I should get the front seat but it was occupied thus I got into rear. The principal of centennial school was also on board, finally coach left at 1000 hours, weather was hot.

I had travelled on this road way back in 1995 and it seems as if nothing much has changed as far as the scenery is concerned but now it is metallic road till Booni. A hydel power is also under construction at Gowazi almost 25 kilometres away from Chitral. My interest now was to follow the siege of Chitral relief force, which came from Gilgit, and to see the area from that perspective. The scenery initially is rugged very narrow and then it opens up however the mountains on the roadside are muddy and kacha with plenty of landslides at frequent distances. Within the coach a lady in burqa and an old man were sitting behind me and when I stole the glance through driver's mirror I realised that she is quite pretty and quite absorbed in the area, she at the end again put on the burqa. The journey to Booni took almost two hours, we changed direction along the River Yarkhun at times on east bank and at others on west, bridges mainly wooden planks one odd was pucca, I have to think where probably only at Chitral.

Valley has one similar pattern, it opens up and then closes again opens up and then closes, plenty of greenery and trees, on the far bank that is opposite to the road the mountains are barren rugged and it seems there was a road or track in old days because one can make out the track and few abandoned habitats in the form of stone shelters. Agha Khan University and school at Reshan, the government college building short of Booni, the hydel power staff colony, which is well guarded and well lay out, are few of the interesting places enroute. Speed of coach was quite high and scary in nature.

Booni is different from Chitral, I got down at the bazaar instead of Adda where Nazir's brother Amanullah was waiting, mobile phone service works here at Booni, I had a easy load and then got in touch with the Amanullah, we had to wait for an hour for connecting coach towards the Songohor. I spent the time waiting at the electric shop; I was surprised to see so many electric gadgets shop selling freezers, microwave oven, electric kettle and washing machine. I enquired about the sate of electricity not much better than the rest of country rather a bit better but the shopkeeper said that people like to buy and more over if one has bought anything the other will buy it even on a loan. This I have heard before as well.

After an hour the Toyota land cruiser two door was ready for travel, I got the front seat, the seat was broken, driver a very young boy and vehicle had diesel filter clogging issue which creates a power surge at climb, a dangerous proposition but I think none of the passengers were aware of it, I kept my eyes on the road, driver and mentally ready to jump at any instant. The number of students were quite high on the road with very high proportion of girls, most of them were wearing all green uniform dress with white duppatta, I later came to know that theses are private school students, same holds for boys wearing shirt, tie and trousers, college boys were wearing white kameez shalwar, over all an open society which is enlightened, girls were talking with males and enroute driver also picked another female student. For me coming from the Khyber Agency it was quite a pleasant change. I forgot to mention about the headgears, in the coach from Chitral-Booni I saw one pathan man wearing traditional puggri, here many were wearing Chitrali cap but equal numbers were without it and very very few were wearing the white colour including myself.

The track is the same that leads to Mastuj and in pathetic condition, muddy, landslides, narrow and at times it opens up, We stopped at mid point to put water into the radiator there were two three other jeeps also. Soon after an hour of drive we hit the track from where we diverted to the right and below to cross the river, a very narrow track very steep and then over the wooden bridge across the river, a vast ground then steep climb and we were soon into the village, I paid the fare for both of us {rupees 300 in total} from Chitral to Booni it was 150/. Now the walk in the village started, narrow stony path with medium level walls on sides, fresh water flowing, thick vegetation, trees laden with apples of all kind green and red. We walked and walked and it was all uphill when we soon hit the open patch where under a walnut tree I saw an old man sipping tea which was being brought to him by a lady probably his wife but logically should have been his daughters; Amanullah told me he is the war veteran for whom I have come this far. We kept on walking and soon reach the end of village and there between a narrow path was Nazir's house, on one side his living and on other his baitahk. My main worry till now was to find the washroom, I thought whether they have western system or is it in the open. This is a major worry in strange places and very dangerous one because it takes minutes in mountains before you get stomach upset.

As we entered into the annexe or baitahk what a scene, green small lawn, a three room barrack and fruit laden trees, there stood two children, one boy of ten and a girl of four, both dressed very nicely and clean, expecting the guest. It reminded my own children and me of Skardu who were exactly the same, the house and scenery is same with High Mountain behind the house and green lawn. Children very well mannered, very friendly and very neat in nature and dress. I also admit that in these almost thirty years of military life this is the first time ever that I have visited a soldier's house, Nazir's father is a retired subedar major of 38 Frontier Force regiment, his brother has just passed masters in commerce and his internship will start from Monday at Booni in bank. Overall the village reminded me of Spanish village at potes, the Scottish highlands. Half the lawn was basking under sun rays and we sat in the shade of apple tree, I pluck one apple and eat it, what a feeling it is, other factor was the washroom which Amanullah showed me and that took all my worries away, I just sat and played with children

while Amanullah went for the lunch, I was hungry because I had not eaten anything since morning and it was now 1600 hours.

The valley which I have travelled so far and the place where I stood now is different in one aspect, it is away from main track and on the far bank thus historically and geographically more isolated than the one on the main caravan route. The Booni Valley Pass starts from here, the mouth is very narrow and it is only recently {30 odd years} that the track has been widened at the base otherwise the centuries old foot track is visible on the mountain. Songohor village is at the mouth of the glacier, which is quite long and steep and ends up at Twin Mountains, which are snow covered; their peaks no less menacing than the K-2 only altitude is the difference.

Soon the son of Nazir brought a pitcher, towel and a bowl, I being a socialist declined this but than under the cultural heritage I washed my hands. It is a beautiful thing of culture, which teaches the future the importance of cultural values a typical central Asian culture. Then both went inside and brought two slavers of dishes. I before coming here have been talking with the mess junior commissioned officer in charge about the local delicacies and he promised me to prepare on my arrival back, Nazir have been listening all this. There was Polai the bread made with yeast and swollen. Ghalmandi, the fried pieces of bread slim one, having the fresh cheese in between, Darshki, which is a mixture of eggs and flour; it was good. Shank, which is a curd, made from the boiling of lassi, it is in small pieces and looks good. Sanawajee which is the only thing having any spice thus it is more favoured by me, it is nothing special but mixing of flour with the local masalas and only now one understands the importance of spice trade route.

Despite all my hunger I could not eat anything but simple bread and sanawaji, not that the other foodstuffs were not fresh but may be they were too fresh. The dairy products of each area, valley differs from other thus the taste of milk is also different; I somehow cannot take any dairy product other than that of my own village. After a cup of tea, which was sugarless because in these parts especially in Chitral they do not take sugar; but sugar was present in a plate. We set off for the veteran Nadir who was still sitting under the tree but there were two additional chairs also put there, I occupied one and Amin who also acted as the interpreter did other.

The children all sat around, there was only the spring water flowing melody, the walnut tree had a big hole in it and I enquired about its age and got the nodded affirmative. There was sun and there was shade also, in the close by distance was few fields having the sunrays falling in the middle and brightening up the already cheerful environs. Few women {two} were standing at rather far distance out of ear shot but looking after the grazing cows which numbered equal in strength in addition to the young calf.

Bit of silence as I absorbed the beauty and in any case you do not just go and ask the veteran a question, in most of cases it takes bit of time to understand each other especially for me to start the question, in this case when I asked him, when were you enrolled? And got a puzzled look, it became obvious that he does not understand Urdu thus Amin asked the same and that is how I got it. I could understand few words and thus makes out the whole purpose, old man like so many others do not use hand signs frequently. Nadir was enrolled in 1945 in Chitral sate Scouts at Drosh and in 1961 got his retirement papers from Drosh too. During 1947-48 Kashmir War he was part of artillery battery, it took nine mules to carry one howitzer. They moved through the Shandur pass towards the Gilgit amidst the snow and extreme freezing temperature; they had very little warm clothing with them as it was promised to be supplied at Gilgit. Nadir and the Chitral scouts remain committed for another seven months. Nadir highlighted that the Chitral states and Chitral Body guard fought the war separately. Nadir was deployed

at Gurais with his guns for another seven months before they were pushed back. Nadir used to get Rupees 2 only, mainly for purchase of milk, although the pay then was rupees 22/ but Nadir like all other men got it after coming home, in case of nadir it was rupees 400/ quite a sum in those days. There was little ration and insufficient warm clothing at the front. Captain Rauf was in charge of the gunners, Major Mohiuddin who was the brother of Mastuj governor was in charge of the scouts contingent, thus in a way the princely family of Mehtar were all engaged actively in the liberation of Kashmir. For ration Nadir went out on hunting and hunted markhoor, they ate the meat, preserved it, presented the head to the officer in charge and made shoes and coat out of the rest; this is how nadir started living as the son of soil. For trouser the army issued blanket was made. Nadir hated the trouser but it was made compulsory to be worn by the officer in charge ‘ thus I would put it on for his pleasure and parade and would quickly changed into shalwar’. During the operations the Indian Air force attacked many times and it was in one such attack that two scouts embraced shahadat, ‘ we would rush towards the cover as soon as we heard the aircraft noise’.

Nadir stayed t the front and then pulled back, on our way back the mule got buried under snow and it was only after the winter that it was retrieved as it was having official issued items on body, which were the cause of many enquiries.

I had nothing more to ask from him so we bid farewell and had a walk of the village, myself, Amin and his cousin who was in early thirties along with one teenage boy. We walked calmly and slowly through the paths made of stones and reached the outskirts by following the fresh water upstream, soon we reached the fresh water fountain head, it was enclosed by a stone hedge and inside fresh water was oozing out.

Amin narrated me the story about how all this place is the property of one man, Ziaart by the name who pretended to be made when the water channel was being made, he would throw the stones into the dug out channel and finally the people left it up as a bad joke and from that day Ziaart is acting normal and now own the channel, amin showed me the house of Ziarat later perched on the edge of the channel a good house.

Amin also narrated how the flood on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2007 played havoc here in the village, I did not paid any attention to it taking it as a flow of glacier in summer but I was bit alarmed as the village being old should not have gone through this tragedy.

I asked Amin more about that flood as we walked through the stoned paths in the village, meantime scanning the two women rather one woman and other grown up girl looking after their grazing cows and lambs. I further inquired about the livestock in the village and acme to know that few keep goats, as they require more attention rather lamb is the preferred pet, cows are there which are smaller in height. Amin told me that initially the flow of water in the village stream started increasing then overflowing and soon the colour also changed into mud but none paid any attention, then all of sudden at night the water rushed and the thundering noise of stones being crushed and hurled was frightening which did not allowed people even time to save their certificates of education, by this time we had reached the house.

Little girl was playful in mood and rolled on lawn, crawled under table and generally amused everyone. Amin’s father Amanullah also joined in and we talked about the apples and pears. He also highlighted the flood, the earth close to glacier just opened up and started creeping upward this lasted for over three days, only one portion of village was affected badly the other mildly and remaining untouched. The water and adjoining stones took away many old walnut trees, according to him in his



life and neither from his old people he had seen or heard anything like that happening in village, best part is that they did not attributed it to any sin like Gomorrah.

It was now almost dark and soon the pale light bulb brighten up clearly indicating the low voltage but soon it was normal and we moved inside the room, There are two Amin big rooms, one washroom with eastern commode and other was closed probably a store, these two room are at two ends of veranda. Inside it was typical native culture with carpet on ground, cushions at the wall and one bed with bedding on it. The hand carved table mat and cornice cover indicates the artistic mind of probably Nazir's wife. I sat t one corner feeling tired and wanting to sleep, my muscles were aching but I had to sit, we had a glass of Chamrock which is a local juice of apricot, it is thick and has its own sweetness ideal for summer, the only drawback with it is that when taken for first time it can upset your stomach, I had taken two glasses and was now waiting for the result. Another feature of mountain or native food, water and bread is that it creates air in your stomach, you need to pass it out otherwise it can create lot of stomach pain. Now all these are culturally taboo issues but they are reality in deed. I soon change into a kameez shalwar which I had brought with me and also handed over the last of shawl to Aman, it was a brown colour male size and I had kept it for myself but now I feel that I have to present something to this old subedar, he was reluctant but happy and I was more than happy to present it to him, my only regret being that I had nothing for the children.

Soon another friend joins in he looked like a genuine tableeghi and was quite interested in my talk. I came to know that Ismailis are in majority in this village and all sects were living happily till 1970 when on fateful day Maulvi Obaidullah made such an inflammatory speech that since then both sects are hardly on talking terms with each other, needles to say that moulvi himself was assassinated after two years. My mind arced towards the assassins of Hassan bin Sabah no doubt looks like their work or trademark. Another round of food despite all my resistance, rice but without the showering of walnut oil, chicken, turnips, bread, and again the cheese filled chapattis, it was too much but I had to eat it. Then came fruit and finally the beautifully decorated custard, which I was unable to eat. I resisted tea or green tea, promised them that I will take the fruit with me in the morning along with the dry fruit, the walnut oil which I was looking for last two months was finally there. Every valley has its own cooking pattern but not long ago everything here in Chitral was cooked in the walnut oil, which is distilled in the house. But now the Dalda or other oils have taken over still walnut oil has its own charm the way olives are to Mediterranean the same way Walnut oil is to Chitral and apricot Oil to Skardu, surprisingly there is no Apricot oil here. The walnuts of this village are quite famous because of their size, they still need another a month before they are fully ripe and then the outer green shell bursts open and then you have to shake the tree to get them on ground, at times even strong wind can do this job for you. A good tree fetches around 80 kilogram of walnuts which the buyers from Chitral takes away by paying almost one third of the price on which they sell at the end. It holds true for apples.

I had a peaceful night and was up at the fajr prayers remembering that the first vehicle from village leaves at 0600 hours. I sat out side in the lawn and watched the sky, it was still full of stars and soon the first sign of darkness going away appeared. Oh I forgot to mention the moon which rises from the mountains behind the house {just like Skardu house} and when I saw it last night it was probably of tenth day and beautiful to stare at. Now at dawn the birds chirping started coming into ears, the village has over four mosques and equal number of Jamat Khannas. I pluck one pear and enjoyed its freshness. Amin and Aman both came and I sat with the father talking about the village he told me that thee are over seven different types of clans living in the village. Meanwhile the breakfast tray came in by this time I was really getting wary of food and complained joyfully that I am leaving this place mainly due to this excessive food which I have to devour where as I would prefer a fresh fruit here. I had to drink tea and eat few pieces of paratha.

I asked the old man about the castes in the village as who stitches shoes that does haircutting. The strange thing is that no particular caste exists in the village for such professions as they do in Punjab. This creates another problem how to classify the people according to their trades. Thus here in this village which is an old village probably in existence for centuries there are seven types of people who live, two categories namely Hishaey and Achanjay along with Ghonomein are the oldest who were always engaged in hardship, hard labour and beegar, then Raza Khel, Syed, Zoondhe, Paksheer or Yashaey are the other castes. The highest caste is the Nawab or ruling class that there is none here in village although the old caste the rais who were ruling it before Kator are probably exists close to village. Ismailis and Sunnis both belong to these classes.

Now the question comes in how this village evolved, it were the Ismailis who advanced from the Broghul towards the down south and at one time they overthrew the Kafir clans the original inhabitants of this valley the original Aryans. They then accepted Islam or the line between these two was at the Booni Valley. With the passage of time the incursion of Muslims or Turks from the Arandu valley put the Sunni sect in firm footing and it was then finally under Shuja ul Mulk in 1926 that a wave to convert the Ismailis forcibly into Sunni started which lasted for a bit but still its remnants can be seen. Today very few Ismailis openly confessed their sect; this is what I learnt from the Carey schoffield the principal of Major Langland's School at sinhur Chitral, she is of the opinion that majority of the Ismaili teachers simply do not want to answer the question about the sect. Ismailis according to Aman Ullah do not offer the Friday prayers, on another question about the fair and festivals in the village, the standard Muslim festivals of eid are celebrated and Ismaili also celebrate Nouroze which falls on 21<sup>st</sup> march every year. Now we started walking towards the intended jeep, the regular jeep had gone early and now a relative of theirs will drop me across the river at Perwak from where I will catch the jeep for Booni. I enquired about the graveyard in the village and was surprised to know that there is no community graveyard here, it used to be but feuds have now forced the people to bury their dead in their own lands. It is all due to scarcity of land.

We bid good-bye and Amin the brother came with me in the Suzuki jeep, which had been converted, into diesel till Perwak. In the way it was still not seven o'clocks, I noticed small boys carrying school bags and coming from the other part of river wearing shirt and tie. There were girls also quite grown up wearing all black uniform carrying books in hand. There is middle and high school for girls in the Songohor village, which is a government, owned that is why the uniform is black. Perwak has only middle school. We got down at the Perwak and waited for the jeep to take me to the Booni. Quite a number of students were walking or waiting for the transport. One has to admire the spirit of parents and children in seeking knowledge; these young boys and girls walk almost three –four miles one-way uphill and downhill one way everyday to gain knowledge. The girl's student while passing said salaam to all standing. Soon I got an old jeep CJ-5 to take me to Booni. It is an art to get into this jeep, you have to climb and then squeezed through the rods to sit, I had a rear seat, journey was uneventful, I dosed off many times, but the ever present risk of jeep going down is a reality which kept me on tenter hooks. We were seven people in the jeep, two students, three going for some judicial work, two of family probably going on medical mission.

At Booni, I had a shave and meanwhile I had put my bag into the waiting Hiace and when I acme out I saw the Hiace moving out and soon it was gone, I was furious and had all kind of names for these Boonis but then I saw that my bag is now placed in the next waiting coach, it lessened up my anger. The coach left after an hour, I had a rear seat and every now and then the driver will stop to carry an errand for someone at Chitral, it is how things work here, letter to post, something to purchase and some small item to give to someone. Seat was uncomfortable, day hot but later it drizzled, coach traversing at high speed, the constant yaw and kind of roll all put together makes this an uncomfortable

ride. I again tried to grasp as much of the geography as possible. Valleys are narrow then open up then again closes down thus each encompassing a separate identity and this is how it was three centuries ago. I arrived back at Chitral at 1200 hours, got the taxi, which charged me two hundred, rupees and I was back in the warmth, hospitality and comfort of mess, nothing can beat it. Had a cup of coffee, thanked Nazir for all his hospitality, received a call from Khyber rifles and then went off to sleep.

## Saturday & Sunday 14/15 September 2013, Petako Gaz , 1825 hours.

The General Officer Commanding the 17 Division Major General Sana Ullah Khan Niazi has embraced shahadat at Dir today ; he was hit by an IED while he was going back after spending the night at Drosh. It was only on Friday evening that commandant and myself were sitting in the mess lawn when i came to know that he is coming by helicopter to visit at Langurbat post. The officers were busy in making out the approaches and take off pattern of helicopters while I just remained on listening post but what I gathered was that programme of general is subject to weather and if it is bad then he may land at Drosh instead of Langurbat. I have never met him , I was scanning the pictures of the Chitral Scouts with the photographer Nazir on Saturday at the office and it was only then I saw his pictures , I had been mistaking him for Colonel Rizwan Rafi but that was Major General Sanaullah, giant of a man; and today at noon I heard from the colonel in charge of the military intelligence about the incident, colonel was going to the mess to hear it on private channels. This is the sad end of the general .

Weekend has been productive, I scanned the pictures on Saturday with Nazir , I still have a feeling that he has hidden certain pictures folders but I think I have enough for the book especially the polo pictures are good. Later I had a tea with the Naik Rab Nawaz from Mulkhow at Phupokhan Gurzain, he corrected me that Ratnei does not mean a cafe rather it is small lawn. He also highlighted that his language Khwar is the more correct version and it is heavy for others , I agree with him. The term Chitrali is as confusing as the term British, in that case it encompasses English, Scott, Irish and Welsh. Same holds true for the Chitral, it is not an ethnic group rather a conglomeration of six mountainous states which are presently the tehsils of District Chitral. In one of the pictures which was taken in Mastuj in early fifties the governor of Mastuj is wearing a paggri which is more of Dogra style than the pathan pattern. Now this is very pertinent lead as the governor always wear correct official pattern of the native state dress but it clearly indicates the absence of Chitrali cap and there by indicating an alien ship of governor. Similar pattern was narrated by the naik also over cup of tea. His father is a retired subedar from FF , a brother was shaheed in Kargil he was serving in Azad Kashmir Regiment there. He himself was initially enrolled in police but later his father pressurised him to join either army or Chitral scouts and now he is a driver here. At Phophokan which means children in Chitrali I saw an old man who looks mentally unstable. I was told by the driver that he was enrolled as a gardener by Colonel Murad in 1986 and since then he is living here doing small errands, he is always ready to fight if any one makes even a gesture towards the Chitral Scouts vehicles or men. The standard of park and the canteen is outstanding; it is certainly among the top ten parks of army in Pakistan. The atmosphere so peaceful with the river Chitral making noise flowing just feet away , you can enjoy the waves and currents of water following under the bridges while sitting on a bench and sipping coffee.

The bakery makes excellent and fresh cake russ, pizza and rolls apart from samosa and kebabs. The other adjoining park is the Chinar or maple gardens it is on the east side of road which separates both parks, old gigantic trees with vast umbrella of branches practically covering the whole lot of park but then this is the beauty of it, ample sitting places have been created by having wooden benches, I saw a shop in which a person was making something on enquiry it was revealed that he is making the

samosas for the park, he offered me to have a samosa but I pended it which I am now regretting. There are two bridges, and these parks are adjacent to the new bridges but as one walks few yards the old bridge and road is hit , this bridge is now barbed due to its structure I believe but more due to security, next to it is the Murad's mosque built on the River , one of the most beautiful mosque in Pakistan almost a replica of old Jhelum mosque but it stands out in terms of its design, architecture, location, colour and beautiful rose garden.

On the way back we stopped at the Chitral polo ground which is at the east end of Ataleeq Bazar opposite radio Pakistan and PIA office, a beautiful scene , long elongated uneven green ground which is ascending towards the south , over a dosen polo players were playing and equal number of horses were being made ready astride the ground. Over a thousand men were watching the game, on the far end the two musicians were playing harmonic melodies which indicates the gaol and the signature tune of the player taking the shoot is played, sun as not very bright, rather cloudy in nature. We sat at the northern end or the bazaar end, two old pavilions are still in use along with a newer one , the players and others were just sitting there.

An interesting day , it was Friday and i wanted to utilise the day important thing to do was to get the pictures of the mounted infantry and the boards of the different appointments. So I was up by the first light , ok bit exaggerating make it second light but i went with Major Kazmi and Captain Fizan along with Major Arbab. Typical mountain morning , little bit of rush in the bazaar and then we were in the fort but this twenty odd minutes drive was enrich, the discussion or rather i joined the conversation when Major Kazmi brought the subject of village defence committees and i enquired about them. Today was the interview day with three or four officers waiting to be interviewed by the commandant.

Typical apprehensions and anticipations of the officers, one goes back year backs when i also went through the same anxiety , to get the house , to get the hut, and apprehensions . Thus it all is very enjoyable and on the other hand one thinks of how time passes so slowly in military life but in a sense it is the beauty of the system ; but it can be a drawback as well. I got the sketch made by the Lance Naik Zahid of the education cadre , an excellent effort beautiful and according to my desire. I took the pictures of it and many other maps of the area and Chitral scouts and the Afghanistan. Then i was lucky to get the commandants briefing from Major Kazmi with whom i am having more informal relationship; I am admiring his qualities. I came to know about the incident at Ursun a couple of years when over 22 Scouts along with the three policemen and levies were killed by the attack through Arandu by the afghans, centuries old pattern; thus i was interested in knowing this important episode in the history of Chitral Scouts the worst night of their history. Meanwhile one C-130 was scheduled to come to Chitral as the pilot of the aircraft had informed the adjutant on mobile . Heard Sindhi in the adjutant office as one officer an ex 5 Light Ack Ack along with his wife herself an army doctor a captain both belonging to the Hyderabad were sitting for interview and talking in Sindhi , what a sound what a feeling to hear it at Chitral. Commandant then had to leave but the Photographer Nazir had taken his pictures and had completed all that required from him. I now waited for the file on occurrences which had the detail of the Ursun incident. The headmaster of the school came and gave me the essays written by the students but the best news was from the tailor who promised to give me the shirt by noon , the work non commissioned officer also showed me the hand woven cloth that was being weave for me. Took some pictures. One interesting fact that has emerged from the adjutant briefing is the Denzing Hall which i had initially heard from Major Siraj Ul Mulk, it is behind the Phokopan Gurzain. I got the albums from commandant offices and also the file but after giving a piece of mind to the clerks . It seems quite in order with some of these clerks. While coming back i wanted to get to the photographer because my

sixth senses are warning me about these tradesmen. In the room a pleasant surprise in the form of the shirt, what a feeling what a cloth, so light yet so warm, soft in nature very light. I again went back with the Major Kazmi after having smoked a joint to get the photographer. In the way I found the talk most intoxicating.

Kazmi narrated that they had given the weapons to the Kalash people after two of their men were killed but they refused to take it stating that they do not require it and they trust the state for their protection. Secondly in another village the villagers gave it after

## Injigan

Injigan is the western most valley of district Chitral, its literal meaning in local dialect is 'prosperous'. On its east is tehsils Mulkhow, on west Afghanistan, north Hindukush and in south is Chitral Town and tehsils. TirchMir the highest peak of the Hindukush is situated here, near Karim abad, Rokhon is the second biggest peak situated near Village Sainak, people call TirchMir as the abode of fairies.

Injigan is divided into three valleys namely Karimaabd, Urkari & Garmchasma. Weather is extreme in winter which blocks almost all ground routes due to heavy snow, spring starts from April onwards. Lotkow is the other name for Injigan, River Lotkow is the largest river of the valley which originates from Kotal Doawra and joins River Chitral near Chitral airport. River Bagosht, Othrai, Gol, Urkari and Karimaabd stream all join in River Lotkow before it terminates. The river is famous for its clear water and trout fish. There is mainly one crop in Injigan except in Bahtooli, Shigoor, Momi, Mough and Mardan Koh. The best grapes are produced in area Mough which are distilled to make local wine. Injigan has many other peculiarities but it is the presence of natural sulphuric warm water which is available year around; it is this which makes the Injigan as the most neat and clean valley in whole of northern areas especially when in other areas people seldom take bath in winter. Mough is famous for the Chitrali patti the hand woven cloth. Urkari valley is the most under developed area of the Injigan, there was not even a jeep able track till 1983. Potatoes of Injigan are also very famous and in great demand. The very first person to be enrolled in Chitral Scouts in 1903 was from Yoft, Shaib Ali Lal son of Khokhan Baig, he later rose to the rank of subedar major the very first subedar major who was a non Kator<sup>13</sup> he retired in 1932. Sultan Jawan alias Manoor, is another brave son of soil who took active part in the Gilgit War of 1947. Sultan Khan Murdaan was born in 1924 at village Murdaan and joined Chitral scouts in 1945 and took active part in 1948 War as Bren gunner, he embraced shahadat 40 kilometres short of Srinagar in a hand to hand fight with enemies. Another stalwart of the area and of 1947 war is Islam Shah who retired as naib subedar, he was enrolled in Chitral Scouts in 1932, he died a natural death in 1990. Ghair Dum Shah Chaweelo who has died in 2002 was another brave scout of Chitral.

Injigan has a predominant Ismaili sect adherents, there are Fatimid also who are regarded as the non .

The cultural history and heritage of the Injigan is heavily inspired by the Tajikistan, Badkhashan, Yarkhun, Kashgiri which is a logical conclusion of the valley being as the entrance into the Chitral valley. The Jinan China utensils are a speciality of the area which used to come from the Kashgiri and China; they were almost unbreakable and above all had the uniqueness to point out the

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<sup>13</sup> Muhammad rahim, tareekh Injigan, hafiz, chitral, 2006, pp, 16-58.

poison in food thus these were very popular with the ruling class. Silver Mushraba also comes from Faizabad in Afghanistan and are given as dowry utensils. Kohkan Baigi is the name of extra large big Deg which were imported in thousands by the prince Kohkan Baig and hence it carries his name even today. Ghaan is another utensil which is made of walnut wood it is big in size the smaller version is called Langri. Tong is a vessel used for keeping milk, lassi and curd, it is the smallest of all utensils. Ghorri is the equivalent of Madaani which is used for making curd out of milk.

## Drosh

Drosh, I have finally made it here, left the Chitral Mess at 1400 hours luckily Captain Fayzan came to mess on a defender and he was going to Langurbat so I got the lift from him, he was rather embarrassed that I am sitting in the rear but this is how the army life goes but I do appreciate his concern.

Drosh is a magnificent fort, built in 1939 on a higher ground which overlooks the whole valley, at this place the Chitral River is joined by a small river coming from the north; Madaglasht, which is a predominant Persian speaking valley comprising of few villages with one odd Chitral Scouts post. On the back of the Mess and the fort, {mess is at the edge of the fort on the higher slope} there are two piquet's of British era, one is known as the Dommel named after the village which is down below and other one is known as Azeem piquet named after someone which I have to trace.

Mess service is poor by any standard, I had the lunch comprising of mutton karhai, very ordinary cooked with trace of lamb smell, salad again just average rather poor and now waiting for a cup of tea for half an hour without any trace of it. Otherwise a classic mess by design and style it is almost a replica of Chitral mess in the colour and design. One small corridor then ante room on left and dining hall on right with kitchen adjacent to dining hall and billiard room/library adjacent to ante room. It is all in wood, which makes it so special. Good silver and trophies, everywhere it is reminding of Lieutenant Colonel Murad Khan, I was thinking about him while sitting next to waterfall as why he committed suicide, was it something in the air or the area, maybe after spending few nights here I may understand him better. It is 1700 hours and sun is still setting its rays on the corner of mess and that speaks of the people who selected the place and designed it to have maximum sun in winter. It is much peaceful than Chitral, no more noise of motorcycles or busses only the constant melodic rhythm of water fall but after short time it also looks like a mental torture. Lot of greenery and flowers, roses are still in bloom, lawn is well manicured. Only three nights ago Major General Sana was staying the night here without knowing that it is going to be his last one. By 1725 hours the sunrays have left the mess building, it is cloudy anyway.

Drosh covers the approach towards the Chitral and Madaglasht, the River Chitral flows at its base {Drosh Town} and runs for another fifteen miles before making a right turn towards the Domel Nisar- Mirkhani-Arandu to enter the Afghanistan. In this way Drosh is the key fort, the base depot. Occasionally the snarl of a donkey rips through the silence and add a bass to the water melody to which I have become useful. To this is the added noise of football being hit hard. They play football every evening. The mosque has just called the faithful to the prayers. Electricity is the same as anywhere else, selected timings, which are generally abided by, but it is poor in watts, the generator than supplies the power.

Fort is narrow from inside and vehicle cannot reach mess, one has to climb a dozen stairs to reach it.

## **Drosh Killa.**

Drosh is on the southern bank of River Chitral and Drosh Fort popularly known as Drosh Killa is on the northern banks of river Chitral, why the fort was not made on the southern bank is obvious when one looks at the area, The River Chitral is in fact a pass which leads to the Chitral the ancient caravan route was on the southern bank whose remains can be seen even today thus the fort was constructed primarily to keep an eye on the route and also to guard against the Dir insurgents.

There are two forts in Drosh one is known as Chitrali Fort and other as Drosh Killa, the former has been turned into a school as back as 1937 while other remained as headquarters of Chitral Scouts for almost fifty years till 1992. Piquets are another enigma because they are only on the north and east of Fort. The fort is large, big, magnanimous and simple in construction, it is in tiers and have solid walls which are now broken and replaced with barbed wires. Originally there was only one entrance into the fort on the western side having a piquet it is disused now; a pity. There are two rings of fort, one which is uncovered by wall and other the proper fort where the gate leads you to the quarter guard and then into the fort. Presently there is another path which is for motors which can lead up to mess but one still has to climb stairs to reach to the mess. From quarter guard another inclined flight of stairs leads to the commandant office and from there to the mess. It is at quarter guard that a original wall painting has been preserved although refreshed every now and then which is a mirror of the past. It shows that almost everything on the northern bank of river belongs to Chitral Scouts and the assistant political agent who used to sit here instead of Chitral.

There are old maple and walnut trees everywhere, most strikingly the four maple trees at the four corners of the ground down below the mess building are eye catching, they are placed originally at the four corners of the ground in such a symmetry that their shadows almost covers the ground. Then there is another tree at the hockey ground which can now be called as football ground as none plays hockey now; it also shows how important hockey was in the past {1926}. This ground actually divides the whole complex of the fort, the barracks of troops are on the one side of ground and on the other these steep path takes the visitor into the fort arena.

Presently the No.3 Wing of Chitral Scouts, 42 Azad Kashmir Regiment and Mortar Battery of Chitral Scouts are sharing the fort, the infantry battalion is mainly using as the rear headquarters so are all the wings, all kind of stores are here, the Ghee, tea, match, charpoy, salt to name few are located here. There is no dearth of accommodation. The Chitral Scouts training school is also here inside the fort complex. The whole fort is inclined in construction, there is hardly any level place less the hockey ground and the stony tennis court which is adjacent to the main gate of fort.

## **Drosh Fort 1899.**

Drosh Fort's construction started in May 1899 and was completed in October 1900. The fort is on the northern bank of River Chitral, on a higher ridge overlooking the complete valley and route of River Chitral and River Madaglasht. Thus from its sitting it is obvious that main threat was from the afghans and the southern circle was the most volatile. In the ancient times the track from Bashgal in Afghanistan entered into Chitral through Arandu and then following the hill track it passes through Domel Nisar-Mirkhani-Drosh-Ayun-Chitral-Garm Chasma and then exiting through Shah Salim Pass. Thus two separate entities one on the southern bank and other on Northern Bank were flourishing. There were very few crossing points on the river and even then the hanging bridges were unable to take the full load of laden camel, horse or mule caravan, only in military expedition a force was able to cross it. In summer the river was in full fury as now and in winter the crossing was possible.

Drosh Fort is built on the ridge in a multi tier design, which is inclined, and hardly any level space is available and even less was in the past. Fort is rectangular in design having mud barracks all along the four walls; these barracks are the distinct hallmark of the fort. The wooden pier style corridor along walls are narrow yet wide enough to allow two men to cross each other. Firing points are available after every seven feet; the best part of the fort was in its rapid concentration of fire and soldiers at all time mainly due to the design. Four piquet at four corners along with equal number of small entrances built of iron doors and one main entrance, which in the past had a gigantic iron and wood door. Quarter guard is on the right side of main gate inside the fort.

First major expansion of the fort took place in 1921 after the third afghan War when new barracks were constructed and second one took place in 1939 and then in mid eighties it was almost complete in every sense when the headquarters were moved back to Chitral. Since then the fort is living in past nostalgia as lack of manpower is barely enough to keep it working.

In the original pattern the complete northern bank was only with the military and political administration. The road leading from Fort to the bridge on the River Chitral was and still is the property of Chitral Scouts and that include the complete bazaar with over two hundred shops. Now the bazaar which has sprung up along the main road is known as new bazaar and Scouts bazaar is called the old bazaar.

Initially the commandant house was inside the fort but in 1920 it was constructed outside the fort and then finally demolished in 2010 to make room for the expansion of Scouts school. Chitral scouts garden is located across the river, this is one of the largest gardens among all corps of Frontier corps, the old landing ground which was built in 1921, last had flight in 1954 and since then is abandoned and turned into a cricket field with proper brown pitch, it is a fantastic field.

Fort had three grave yards, one known as cemetery had both the Muslim and Christian military personnel's and is located at the south eastern end, the Hindu graveyard was situated a mile further east but now a days there are no remnants of that graveyard, however the other cemetery is maintained by the scouts and the army unit stationed in Drosh {they are here since 2009}.

The contractors bring fresh ration, fodder for animals, petrol and other commodities as they have been doing it for last hundred years. The Chitral Mountain Artillery is also stationed here, it has been its home base for a century and despite all other changes this has remained in vogue. Mounted infantry also originally had their birth here, the stables are still functional and the horses, mules, donkeys all live together, {mounted infantry only looks after the horses and animal transport is responsible for donkeys}.

Presently the lush green hockey field serves as football ground with daily matches being played between the asr-maghrib prayers, it is a treat to the eyes to see such colourful attires running around a ball. In the parade ground, which is now known as Murad Ground the civilians are allowed to play the games in the evening, as there are no other sports facilities available to them, similar is the attitude towards the use of cricket field.

Mountain Hospital was also at Drosh before it was also shifted to the Chitral. The present half mounting barracks were once the hospital wards, there are two such barracks, the bigger one was general ward and smaller one was bifurcated into officers' ward and offices. The operation room was built later in 1938 {present MRC}. All barracks inside have two rooms, one inner which is larger in size and other a small room, wooden planks and mud has been used in original construction and there is no trace of iron. The bricks were used later either in expansion or in restoration.



Fort from inside is all green, chinar, apple, pear trees are almost everywhere yet the four chinar trees at the four corners of the office barrack are worth appreciating; they were planted with precision and then looked after for long from grazing horses and other animals to reach such heights. They are as old as the fort itself.

## Drosh Officers mess dining hall.

Words at times lose their value because they are used daily and for everything thus the word impressive may look odd but this is what it feels to be sitting here at midnight when outside the yellow glow of full moon is getting pale because the moon is now up the mess, for hours in a stoned state of mind I have been staring at the two passes the pass on left the Chitral and on the right or northern leads to Madaglasht.

The hall is covered with walnut wood almost touching the ceiling all around, with hand carved fire places, shields on wall the PMA, Engineers, Punjab Regiment, FWO, head trophies of Markhoor are staring from all corners with the head mascot on the southern wall kept an eye on me while I was having the dinner alone. Three silver trophies the bronze infantryman holding and charging with the bayonet rifle, the big silver bowl in the centre and traditional ibex trophy without which no room of Chitral Scouts seems to be complete. On the far end at the fire place half a dozen silver ware and a tray below the Markhoor trophy, windows are on the southern side with ample space in the front to have the breakfast while having a look at the lawn and valley down below especially the Chitral Pass is in the centre. Ceiling is also made of wood panels with chandelier hanging down, two ceiling fans and two lights on each end completes the scenery.

Hall and mess are deserted now and they are in this state since 1992 when the headquarters move from here to Chitral, it looks haunted now, I sat alone in dark in the ante room and felt the company of all past visitors, I thought of Commandant Colonel Murad as what made him commit suicide, I don't believe that he was upset on his posting that speaks low of him. Did he really thought of himself as indispensable after commanding the Chitral for twelve long years, there was another commandant back in 1937-1947 but he left his post in a jovial mood so why Murad committed suicide. I have no plausible answer to his actions. Maybe he was instable like most such persons, let's not forget that he was a poet also, a bachelor, a lost love. Who knows, maybe he was insane or he was high on that night but on what that made him took his life. Sitting and looking at the Chitral pass I thought of the 'Man who would be King', it is similar to Murad's life.

Madaglasht are another enigma, who are they and how come the Persian language and customs have survived in so many years and centuries or even millenniums. Are they lost soldiers of Darius or Feroze who was running away from Alexander, is it possible that they entered from the Bashgal Valley or Arandu and instead of going into the Chitral valley they took the northern valley, similarly may be the Alexander's soldiers took the north western valley in their chase and they ended up at the Kalash Valley. The Kalash Valley is on the opposite bank of River Chitral just across the Drosh.

The old caravan route is on the southern bank of the river the reason being that they never wanted to cross the river with laden horses and camels. Thus the whole route encompasses the southern part of present day Chitral, including the Lotkow valley leading straight to Kashkar {TirchMir}. Even the name of River Chitral is controversial, from Drosh down to Arandu it should be known as River Drosh, as River Chitral is only christened with this name after the amalgamation of river Lotkow and river Yarkhun just miles west of Chitral Town.

The Drosh has the same place in relation to Chitral what Jamrud Fort has to Khyber Pass. The Chitral starts from here and finishes at Chitral a mere 40 odd miles this is what Chitral was in past.

It is strange feeling to sit alone in a room which at some time in past had a glorious time where the presidents and prime ministers had dined and laughed, now it is haunted never to have the same glory again. The fort was constructed on 1899 and commissioned in 1900, probably this mess was constructed then or few years later because it was almost religious to have the mess for the officers and there were few infantry battalions stationed here along with artillery pieces. From 1929 the aircraft started making landings here it must be a great day for the natives to see the aircraft coming and going. What went through their minds was it an end of the world to them or the ultimate symbol of whiter race superiority.

The PMA shield has a history because it was presented by Major General Rahat Latif Butt who came here in 1981 but he had been here in 1954 as a cadet himself, what a feeling to be at the same place where you have been there as a cadet and now as a commandant. He has written about that in the visitors book of Chitral Mess.

In the darkness and in the solitude of the night the Markhoor looks almost alive, its long hair hanging down from his chin just like an old religious man. Here the fear is not of any mortar or artillery shell as in Miranshah but that of fairies and werewolves and other such things, the place looks ideal for such ventures. What about the hidden history of the mess, the scandals the murders the gossips, at least we know about one the murder and about others one had to run his imagination and there is no end to that.

It was Captain James of 14<sup>th</sup> Punjabis who married the local girl in 1899 on the Christmas day the background of this is that James had gone on the hunting while on leave and it was at OsiakGol that he felt down almost killing himself but was saved by a local girl who had gone out to fetch the water and she dragged him to safety, looked after him and even nursed him and that was the reason for that love story ending in such a happy ending. But the story did not finished here because next year the Captain James died while on hunting at the same place.

### **Full Moon at Drosh, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013.**

This time the full moon stretched for over three nights, first night at Chitral Officers Mess two nights ago when I spotted it and since I was monitoring it for last one week thus I was confident about it, it rose from the mountains above the mess, the wall across the River Chitral and slowly travelled over the mess tree and making a loop came over head, playing hide and seek through the maple leaves. The Chitral town basked in its yellow glow, I text Reena about it, thought of my children and wife and mother as much of my life revolves around this full moon. In my childhood lying on the cot with my mother on the roof and watching the full moon. My aunt narrating me the stories. It was common fable that the grandma is knitting the wheel, it was called Chanda Mama. The word Chanda is since used to point towards the beloved, it is common pet name of all girls apart from gurya. Time passed by and I forgot about the full moon for decade and it was neither in military academy nor in field exercises but at Siachen in 1988 that I saw and fell in love with moon forever. I had come out of my igloo in the frozen month of January at over 18000 feet give and take few feet but I got my insignia of mountaineering there thus it was definitely over 18000 feet. The moon outside was fascinating, I pissed which was the reason of my coming out of the warm igloo and felt nirvana. Only then I saw the moon in its full glory. The mountains all around as far as eye can travel were covered in white thick cream of

snow and ice. The Eagle Peak, the twin towers, the narrow cliff, the deep gorge and glacier down below were all visible and pure white. I stood there for eternity, nothing was in my mind but the sheer magnitude and magnum of beauty of nature. I was in awe of it and need not to move but at last the cold forced me to go inside. Probably next time it was blizzard and next time it was partial cloudy and that was the end of it.

Then came love affairs, one with my wife under the full moon, I was lying in a bushy stream just to have a glance of her when she would walk by at her after dinner walk with her colleague. Writing letters and reading them under full moon. Then came the tragic part and the suffering of a lost love to be borne under the full moon. In next phase it was flying in full moon, it was always conducted in full moon conditions thus it became a second nature to be aware of it. Watching Karachi and surrounding islands on a calm full moon with sea waves touching the land, even the tortoises were visible, the city lights and the harbour, the airport's runway lights and their changing colours as one approaches them in a glide. Next it was Thailand Kohpagangan island in the arms of a German lady watching the full moon and only then I saw how the sea waves are termed as high tides and how human tides corresponds to it. Back to life and a walk under full moon with my school heart girl Reena near her hostel and the aroma of the night queen flowers. The marriage and the full moon slowly and gradually just faded away, then came children and the mountains but I think I have omitted one of the most eventful full moon, the one I saw at K-2 base camp with Pink Floyd and the hashish; it changed my life forever and I came back to it after few months and saw it again without any worry of food or place to sleep.

With my children I enjoyed it lying in the cool summer of Skardu for two seasons watching it to come from the north west of my house, I enjoyed it my pack of dogs and their pups holding them in my arms, I saw it with snow all around walking alone under its spell towards the glacier with my house behind me.

Then came Glasgow, the full moon was then my link to my past, to all my life because I had left all of it for nothing, everything was gone except this full moon, I gave night duties under its light I came back from library, club, bar under its spell. I dreamed with my eyes open when ever it was in full glory. I had it last again at Thailand with Reena and other one at Aitcheson but never again with my children and wife since Skardu. Last full moon was at Hydapass thinking about from where Alexander crossed it and then having almost five successive full moons in North Waziristan with hardly any lapse of concentration some of them were spent with the artillery duel with the miscreants going on under its light and now this one.

Now I don't think of anyone in particular, yes Reena comes to my mind my mother comes to my mind because I have seen quite of these with her lying on the cot in the village on summer nights thinking and talking of life and the beauty of it.

Madaglasht.

Madaglasht is a north-western valley of Chitral or more precisely that of Drosh. Its fame is in its being Persian speaking, Persian culture, 2000 odd families living in a remote area. They are also famous for being arms manufacturer of highest esteem in the past and now for weaving and knitting woollen sweaters and socks.

I went there out of curiosity on 19<sup>th</sup> September on a public transport, I left the Drosh around 1500 hours as the jeep intend going that direction leaves the town at same time, there are two methods of going there one is the public transport which i have mentioned and there are not more than few

vehicles that go there, other is to hire the public taxi mostly Toyota Binjo cars which can also take you there, the jeep fare was rupees 200, I am not sure about the taxi fare. There are no hotels at Madaglasht and any tourist intending staying night has to lodge himself with villagers. I did not know anybody and just a sense of adventure took me there.

The track leading to Madaglasht starts just on the northern edge of Drosh, initially the track is good as compared to other mountainous tracks but after twenty odd minutes it starts becoming ascending, narrow, stony and dangerous. The Sheeshu River flows all along, it has clear water which is coming from numerous brooks, fountains, springs that falls into it on regular interval. At times its bed is broad but never is it too narrow. There are villages on other side too, village is a wrong word rather few houses or even lone house perched high on mountains amidst the forest.

The journey kept on going, jumps and more jumps, one of the passenger in the rear puts his glass wrapped in a cloth behind our seat and we two sitting in the front seat did not object to it as it is the common custom here, none complains because tomorrow it will be his turn to face the same dilemma. We had two breaks in between where the driver put water in radiator and passengers had a smoke. Most of the passengers were wearing jeans also, all in all we were twelve male passengers with no female on board.

We drove through small packets of habitation, the overall scenery was dry but after almost three hours we reached near green belt and this was start of Madaglasht area. The Madaglasht word holds true for an area but among them one village also carry the same name which was my destination. This valley is peaceful and as such no requirement of even having a scout post. The scenery short of Madaglasht not only differs from the other in terms of the tree but also in the pattern of their graves, almost all graves were covered with wooden coffin something very peculiar to the Kafirs. I saw three shrines also one of the very first that I saw in Chitral. Jeep finally stopped at Madaglasht, a small mountainous hamlet, we stopped on the home bank of a wooden bridge, the real village is on the other side where driver took me there and we came across Naib Subedar Ali Nawaz of the Chitral scouts he is retired now since 2007. He was referred by the same scout who came to drop me at the Drosh. I was mentally ready to spend the night in the village guest room on payment but Ali took me to his home.

Ali's home is small at least from the direction through which we entered, a small lawn having fruit trees, apples and pears with few space reserved for growing up of kitchen vegetables, the river flowing next to it. Ali was busy in harvesting his field but now he left everything and just concentrated on being a host. I met his children, three in number all in toddler phase and one of them was going to school, later I learnt that Ali in total have six children, four daughters and two sons. His two elder daughters are studying science, one in class 12<sup>th</sup> and other in matric, the third one being grade seventh. His daughter Riffat who is studying in matric came and shook my hand which is something very unusual in this part of world but then this is what Persian culture is all about. She is one of the most prettiest girl I have come across in Chitral, blue eyes and fair colour with good height, very soft spoken, she sat with me and converse and I thought of my daughter who is of same age and immediately started liking her like my own daughter. I asked her many questions about her school, her family and so on. They all were speaking Persian, the young ones just jumping around but in a pleasant way, no crying or shouting or abusing. Ali's cousin a post master who has recently retired also join us and being retired we both had many commonalities. I saw Ali going out and inquired about where he is going and he pleasantly mentioned shop. I was little worried lest he purchase anything for dinner but he just calmly waved his hand and went about his business.

I learnt that whole village is comprising of Ismaili faith Muslims and there are few Sunnis as well, i have seen one odd flag depicting the jamait uleema islam at the start of the village. I also noticed free movement of womenfolk which is so common in Punjab but so rare in this part. Evening was now growing along, weather was bit cool {Madaglasht is at 6000 feet}. We moved inside into the hujra, a medium size room having carpet and cushions on floor, pictures of Ali Nawaz in frames in uniform adores the fire place, few religious posters but nothing unusual in any sense. The washroom very neat and clean. I inquired about the electricity and water arrangement in the village. There is a hydel power house which supplies the electricity to the village around the clock, it is less but still better than nothing. Water is again coming from fresh water spring. There are two schools for primary education and one middle school and one college all less one are being run by the Agha Khan community welfare organisation. The teachers are good and qualified. In summer there is one month holiday in July and two months off in winter January-February. In winter there is heavy snow fall and all routes are practically blocked. The other end of Madaglasht is also blocked with just a foot track that leads to the Goolen a small village north of Chitral. Thus people can travel from here to Chitral but it is only used by foreigner trekkers; no more there due to security threats.

For an hour we played with kids, i was feeling embarrass for not having any gifts with me for the family, i gave rupees 1000 to Riffat to buy books and later gave all my change 250 rupees to the toddlers. Ali Nawaz later joins in and we talk about the militia life, he was trained as a bomb disposal expert but later he opted for retirement as he wanted to have more time with his family. He is now looking after his meagre lands but happy and content. His elder daughter also came in to say hello, she also shook hands and exchange pleasantries so did the third daughter. Dinner was ready. The utensils were taken from this room by his two daughters and Ali helped them by putting the sheet on carpet and laying the plates. He had cooked a chicken the highest sign of hospitality, i felt bit sorry for causing him such, rice and salad along with yogurt. It was excellent cooking, delicious and very aromatic. We three males had the meal and later Ali took all the items away and i believe then others had the meal.

Postmaster narrated me that they all are Ismaili, their forefathers came from Afghanistan but their Persian is different from them, they had opted for this land. I have my own reasons to partly believe this aspect of history. Thousand years ago or at least five hundred years ago the population was very less and not more than twenty odd families must have been residing here. Why and how they came here will remain a mystery, they can also be runaway soldiers just like the people living in Kalash. Apart from their language there is nothing peculiar about them on the surface but inside this cultural variation and openness is the key to understand them.

Ali laid down elaborate bedding comprising of few mattresses and quilt. I inquired about the hand knitted sweaters and he went around and brought half a dozen of them i bought one for rupees 1800/-. Ali gave me a pair of woollen socks as a souvenir and in return i gave him my sunglasses. Night was peaceful. I left the door unlocked, a sense of fear came momentarily but it was natural and i soon overrode it and enjoyed a pleasant night rest. The vehicle in the morning leaves at 0500 hours thus i was up at 0430 when Ali came with warm water bowl for shave, soon he came with three parathas and two fried eggs along with cup of tea. His wife must have been busy in preparing them for half an hour ago. There was no time so i packed the food and Ali carried my small bag and we reached the jeep stand where despite all of Ali's protest i agreed to sit in the rear of jeep as the front seats are normally reserved for females in the valley.

It was a dangerous journey under moon light, still dark and driving through the mountainous track which is rugged and zigzagged. I was sitting on the temporary mat along with three other passengers and three were standing with the iron bars at the rear, jeep was open. I wished and sensed

that safety is more in standing with your eyes facing the road as only then you can make out the progress of jeep. In my case being sitting would be bit too late in jumping out in case jeep traverse into the river down below. These thoughts kept my mind occupied. We climbed up the steep track then down, another sharp turn and then another sharp descend and this continued for an hour before jeep started staggering and soon came to an halt, it ah darn out of diesel. We had practically blocked the road or track and now there were five or six other vehicles behind us , our driver got the diesel from them {six litres} by sucking through their fuel tank and this is how i reached back to Drosh by 0900 hours with very sore back yet i was full of admiration for the Ali Nawaz. I have seen the Madaglasht the Persian culture and got an insight into them.

## Mirkhani Fort. 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013

On 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013, i had left Drosh at 1500 hours for the Mirkhani, it seems difficult proposition to do so because i am lazy and if i spend a night at one place then it seems almost a miracle if i am able to leave but i had to do so . Mirkhani Fort is on main Lowari-Drosh road, it is half an hour drive from Drosh and the fort itself s visible about five minutes short of it as it stands high on a ridge overhanging the River Chitral which makes two omega bends here and then set course for Afghanistan via Dommel Nisar and Arandu .

I travelled by a public transport, i got a car taxi from Drosh, it was already full but the scout and the driver was kind to accommodate me and the elderly person sitting in front seat despite all my protests vacated the seat, i feel embarrass over this .En route i saw the fort at Nagur which was built by the local royalty in 1929. The fort is impressive and looks like a military fort, it has one hanging bridge which connects it with the main road, at night the bridge is closed down there is a post of scouts also to ensure this. The reason is obvious the other bank of river {southern} connects with Afghanistan and Kafiristan and as such it s closed down. In old days the Nagur was one of the key place for crossing the river.

I got down at Mirkhani Fort and introduced myself to the sentry who was courteous enough to offer me a seat in his post. The wing commander was away on a tour to post but was expected to be back before sun down. I sent a chit to the subedar major Akhtar, who after few minutes came out and took me inside. We sat in the lawn and he ordered for food and tea. Food was good, comprising of rice, mutton curry , salad, rooti and customary fruit. Mean while he arranged for my accommodation.

The fort looks very small after the Drosh Fort stay, a single storied barrack on both ends running all along. The length of fort is not more than 100 yards with a width of another fifty yards. No more wooden barracks or huts, only two exits one at the front and other at rear with another one on eastern wall which looks like make shift. One sentry piquet at the gate and that's all. I was wondering about the officers' accommodation when the sentry took my luggage and i followed him, we exit from the far gate and all of a sudden the full beauty of the fort was revealed. The area between the fort wall and the ridge which originally was meant for stables have now been converted into a beautiful garden having accommodation for troops and in 2009 a beautiful three room hut was constructed; i had one room there.

The mountain battery which came here in the aftermath of 2011 attack is now being relieved with another battery from another regiment , they are arriving today and a tea break was being arranged in their honour. I just kept sitting in the lawn of the hut enjoying the beauty of the area. Being on higher ground the view is extended , with river almost 500 feet down below making its two turns, across the

bank of the river the green fields of the Nagur with few house, the fort is not visible from here{Nagur fort}. However a look down reveals the sandy beach of the river which is presently used for playing cricket. It is only now that water has receded otherwise in peak summer it covers everything down below. One thing which i have learnt here is that all old villages are on relative higher ground , much higher than normal and all new comers are the one having their houses built near the bank. Thus one can make out which locality is old and native.

Lieutenant Colonel Tauqeer the wing commander also arrived and we had a cup of tae together, the initial few moments with any commander are very important because the whole show can be made or break in these moments. But so far i have found all the officers very respectful and helpful. The other three officers were Major Ali Ahmed the battery commander of outgoing battery and two captains namely Tjdar and Fayyaz. I was also invited to join in the tae break being arranged. Typical army tea break with cold chicken, rice and salad. There was a dance and music as well.

Later at night we all four sat around the lawn, wing commander had gone to his residence which is also outside the fort his parents are on a visit these days. Major Ali turned out to be a poet of Urdu, he gave me his copy of poetry generally good. He is romantic, nature loving and like all military Urdu poets he is sensitive. He for hours recited his poetry while other two captains long ago hit the bed. Moon still came out and what a view it gave. At night i went to sleep, kind of youngsters that they gave me an independent room.

The day is routine, everyone getting up late, the sun rays are falling on the western bank of the river and the fort is still shrouded in the dim light. The lone rooster has been calling his shouts on regular basis but with no hen in sight it calms down. I had got my first cup of tea and now waiting for the clothes to come back from dhobi. Another long yell from rooster. In the morning, i just sat out looking at the river and surroundings. Had a breakfast of paratha and omelette , then met the wing commander at 1030 for group photographs which was arranged outside the main gate, elaborate arrangements, traffic was halted for the duration. My other inquisitiveness was to meet Naik Nasir who was the lone survivor of Darashot post attack of August 2011 in which 22 scouts were killed. He was currently posted at a post but wing commander called him down for the interview.

I later roamed around with a scout as guide. There are few shops as well on the outer periphery of the fort, a custom check post and meteorological station is also located. A new mosque is being constructed by the wing also.

We all less wing commander departed for the half an hour drive to Dommel Nissar, the battery commander had to show the new officers the area thus i was lucky to have a lift in the army vehicle.

The journey from Mirkani takes almost 45 minutes of drive, the track is not that bad rather it is grand when compared to the other parts of Chitral, no dangerous curves still any novice can end up at river bed and that was one reason i sat in the rear seat amidst two captains they insisted on mine sitting in front but i regretted, and rather sat with them in the rear between two captains giving all the pleasure of window seats. The scenery is similar to any other part of northern areas, a river running along, track winding through the mountains occasional vehicles carrying wood coming from Arandu direction , i just noted only four vehicles enroute one reason is the road ahead of Dommel Nisar is closed due to mud slides. I saw the Katusi post enroute and the bridge over it which has been rebuilt by army engineers, the FWO camp and then few more turn and the fort was in sight. The rocks lying on the side of road are iron ore which is precious commodity. No shop, no village on the road; we entered the Dommel Fort. The track goes upward and then stops at a parking bay with few trucks standing, the fort

gate and the silhouette of its wall, the wing commander's office which was constructed only recently by Lieutenant colonel Tauqeer stands out as a piece of architect. The maple tree has been preserved and it goes through the veranda of the office, beautiful design. The aroma of fresh pure natural wood fills the air when i entered it. Lieutenant Colonel Naveed is the wing commander, he is from artillery , slim but very cordial, jovial, humble and courteous. I glanced at the wing commanders board and saw Major Ali Imran's name over there.

Naveed is a good company and its after along that i have enjoyed conversation nothing intellectual just pure military fun, he was DQ in Lahore brigade{ 114} and how the things work thee , one really feels pity with the staff officers but now he is enjoying it. Another retired officer came he is working with FWO had been working in the Chitral Scouts in the past, from OTS and from COAS regiment but nothing extraordinary about him same talk about plots and other. He was narrating how he was swindle by his own course mate with his commutation . He left and then after some time we had the lunch in SM's office which is adjacent to wing commander's. Lunch was god, rice, chicken fried but good one and the standard Mountain Dew cold drink followed by the fruit of pears, apples and grapes. It was evening time the artillery offices left for Mirkani. The Dommel Nisar life is slow rather boorish and lonely and evening games seems to be the right recipe for it; they play volleyball the king of troops games.

Volleyball is an excellent game requires little space and over sixteen players can play. Not smashing but gentle hitting, players keep on coming and joining the teams , one team led by the captain and soon wing commander also joined in both good players. Game lasted till Maghreb prayers when nit was called off.

I did not consumed my dinner rather went to work and slept around midnight.

## Dommel Nisar.

It is 1930 hours , at Dommel Nisar Fort, the fort was constructed in 1942, it is bigger than Mirkani but much smaller than Drosh. It is double storied, cemented brick, thick 20 odd feet high walls with high Iron Gate on one end and a small exit at the other end. It is 200 yards by 50 yards in a straight plain rocky ground with river Chitral running along its western wall separated by a narrow stony track. On the further far bank which in this case becomes the west bank or far bank is inhabited by two odd families with half a dosen females working in the small elongated field wearing red chaddar{ only 30% }. The fort is constructed in a elongated pattern mainly due to the dictate of the ground thus you end up facing the rather gradual high mountain wall. On the southern end the River Chitral takes its rather second last bend and merges to the west. On the east is that is the back of the fort the again high hillock blocks the view and provides protection; the plenty of high maple trees which by any standard are not older than a century almost obscure the view.

I can hear the consistent and persistent yet pleasant noise of river water running fast , it is regularly interrupted by the prayer calls on the loud speaker, here it is really penetrating as there is no other noise to over run it , the water flow on the other hand provides a back ground medley. The prayer call is brief and to the point. Dommel Nisar is the in centre between the Mirkani & Arandu , it is the last fort built by British on this River Chitral axis, ahead are the posts like Langurbat and then Arandu, on the northern side coming from Mirkani the road is excellent but alas only for a brief distance but



FWO is working on the widening of the road till Arandu with UAE sponsorship which certainly will bring a strategic change both economically and culturally; defence is debatable because with the construction of road coupled with the opening of Lowari Tunnel the centuries old issue will be resolved, a loop is thus being provided to the Afghans and people living in Central Asia to move freely southward through Arandu Pass via Dommel Nisar-Mirkhani, turning left and moving through Lowari in winter too. It is the shortest, safest and most economical route from the Mughul heartland crossing Oxus and then instead of moving through Broghul into Chitral and then crossing Darkot Pass towards the Gilgit and into Kohistan before hitting river Indus. Other route traditional route is through Zebak- following Bashgol Valley into former Kafiristan and present Nuristan of Afghanistan, hitting Arandu at Birkot. The earlier caravan had no option but to follow the river which now is known as Kunar and hitting Jalalabad or the Kabul- Kunar conflux which roughly 100 miles south of Arandu enters into plains of Peshawar; the Khyber Pass. The major limitation in the past were the militant and often hostile tribes who each eyed the trade caravan as a booty, they as honourable tribesmen merely preferred the caravans to pass through their territory and in return getting the security toll. Now this all has taken new dimension; the sectarian vermin, the majority of population living near Oxus is the follower of shia and Ismaili sect which the Sunni tribes of Nuristan, Kunar, Jalalabad, Kabul, Bajaur, Khar, and Dir are not very friendly; unfriendly is rather a very diplomatic word because much of present day violence in the area is mainly and chiefly attributed to this madness along with historical variations.

Dommel Nisar was constructed mainly for any Afghan threat and not the perceived Russian threat. Drosh was constructed in 1900 and Mirkani in 1940 thus in between these years the major and only serious conflict after the signing of Durand Line Pact in 1893; was the Third Afghan War of 1919. Mirkani- Dommel Nisar Axis is rather the exhibition ground of great game and there is no solid logic to deny the perception that almost thousand years ago the similar defensive fortification and strategy was adopted by the Kafirs against the invading Aryans and later Turk Muslims, the only pint of difference is on the choice of banks of river as the line of fortifications. Even today the old track route is visible on the far bank which is the edge of kafirs homeland, the Kafiristan.

Dommel Nisar remained a quite, isolated, lonely place where time seems to have stand still since it was constructed, it was awaken after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and the thousands of Afghan refugees entering into Chitral through this one route as all others were desolated. These Afghans made mud villages along the banks where ever it was available, those were the days that world was in favour of them and the people of Chitral welcomed them with open heart after all they were brothers; mostly. In 1962 Pakistan had exchanged the territory with Afghanistan, gaining the General Ayub ridge where a post bears his name across a mile in Torkham and in return giving them the area in Dost Muhammad which is across Arandu. Thus with this act the few hundred odd families all of a sudden found themselves as part of another passport, currency and laws. As a convention these people all along the Durand Line are given right to move freely across the border. At dost Muhammad the situation is no different, there are 40 odd men of Arandu who daily go across the border to open their shops in Afghanistan by crossing over the bridge, reciprocally there are average 20 odd families visit Pakistan daily just for medical purpose.

After sunset the Fort's lone gate is closed and life begins inside the fort, the mosque is outside the fort and it is only the Isha prayers which keeps the gate open. The additional battery of mortars and gun s have extended the fort southward with new mud boundary wall coming up, this all took place after the attack of august 2009 which was mainly, chiefly along Mirkani-Dommel Nisar-Arandu axis. Miscreants the Afghans came from the west across the river, they descended down from mountain after darkness making use of lapse of security at .....Bridge which was kept open contrary to the age old convention of closing. Three posts were attacked physically and all others including the Dommel Nisar

and Mirkhani Forts were put under fire attack to keep them down there by restricting the reinforcements and gaining time. On that deadly night 22 Chitral Scouts embraced shahadat with Sepoy Nasr Minallah standing alone in his post for well over thirty hours and there by stalling the grand plan of the attackers. After this incident army moved in to plug the gaps and to act as a deterrent potent force, artillery battery ex 101 Mountain regiment commanded by Major Ahmed Nawaz was the first one to move in with their headquarters at Mirkani , having observers at Dommel Nisar anda hed. One of the Northern Light Infantry regiment{3} also moved in followed by 42 AK and 33 Baluch Regiment whose commanding officer along with general officer commanding 17 Division embraced shahadat in an IED blast on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

Day starts with Fajr prayers and then slowly moved in , most of the strength is deployed on post thus remaining have to act as reserve and provide administration efforts. There is no fax machine and mail official comes through Mirkani which is collected at past ten hundred hours. The wireless communication works perfectly both for official and private talk. Water is in abundance due to the spring as river water is muddy in summer. Electricity is also provided through hydel and also from Shushi power house. Dry ration is collected from Drosh Fort and fresh ration is supplied by contractor.

**2130 hours.** I had just ventured out and spotted the fort door ajar with no sentry visible this is dangerous. These small lapses of security can cost very dearly, i have fail to understand that how these fine men and fine officers can be so callous about the security. This dilemma is everywhere especially in corps like Chitral having an area so large that commandant is unable to keep an eye but it is not the commandants job either it is the wing commander's responsibility. In the morning when we came to Dommel Nisar and i mean myself, Major Ahmed Nawaz and two young captains, none of us was armed and that is a very bad message for the youngsters. There were gunmen in the rear but officers were not armed and none was carrying water. Anyway i have locked my room from inside but it is of no use in case of attack.

Back to Mirkhani. After a night stay at Dommel Nisar i was back to Mirkhani. In the morning i had the group pictures of the wing taken . The wing also had made elaborate arrangements for the pictures, i have found these scouts to be picture happy. All weapons were laid out even the mortar shells were there. I later took more pictures of the Chitral Scouts mortar battery, the scouts were in track suits but i made it clear that only those pictures which are operational will be published so they happily change into uniform just for the pictures.

I walked out of the fort with one regimental police scout accompanying me. I enquired about the local population but he was almost blank. We walk and i notice the movement in the house across the river bank, there were few women carrying out house chores like running after the goats, children. On our way we after five minutes walk came across the village Dommel , it has one school in which the Chitral Scouts education staff also teaches on voluntarily basis. The same wooden structure is also used as mosque and as a madrassa. The teacher also joins us and soon he called the local teacher too. The Dommel Nissar literally means a resting place. The whole area is overwhelmingly Afghan in culture and even language here is Pashtu instead of Chitrali. People are adherent of Sunni sect and very conservative in outlook. However in noticed the women working in field. This valley is different from the rest of Chitral. In the madrassa there was a notice displaying in which all those who have missed the prayers wee warned not to do so and they were fined too. The area is famous for its grapes. The school boys who are studying in higher classes have to walk almost three miles to attend at Lachi Gran and they were back now. These students after coming back from school first offer prayers and then go home, have lunch comprising of a bread and few fruits, vegetables are rare here. Then they attend the religious teaching and then an hour of games comprising of football or cricket. Majority of

them when they come back had to tend the sheep and other chores of home. The teacher also increased my knowledge by stating that the piquet of the fort high up on the ridge was a Hindu raja's fort in old days, he further stated that while constructing his house he came across buried items but nothing expensive in them.

At Mirkhani, I met Naik Nisar and later we both went to have a talk at the Tuck shop outside the fort. This shop was recently commissioned by Lt Col Tauqeer who has a knack for constructing and doing it within time. This shop is his idea and an excellent one. Presently it lacks wash room but it is on hand to construct two washrooms one for ladies and other for males. One really has to travel by road to comprehend the value of this shop. I recall when I was coming to Chitral few months ago with Major Kayani and his friends we were really looking for a place to rest and have a cup of tea. Crossing of Lowari takes its toll on every one.

## 28<sup>th</sup> September, Drosh.

Yesterday it was the **Bara Khana** of Lieutenant Colonel Naeem, he is going back to army after one year stay with No.3 Wing. He has served with them rather led them in Bajaur for six months and six months here at Drosh. On 27<sup>th</sup> September when I came back to Drosh from Mirkhani and had all my intention of going back to Peshawar but I stayed for this baara khana. It was decided on the spur of the moment.

Baara khana is a tradition in which the outgoing commander is given a farewell dinner by the troops, it is done by saving the ration especially the meat and then having a feast. In my days of army the standard and scale of ration in army was rather low as compared to the present scale moreover the ration scale of Frontier corps is much higher than army. The new wing commander Lt Col Burhan is from 42 AK Regiment which he has commanded and from there he has posted to Chitral Scouts; the regiment is also deployed around Drosh thus military band from the regiment was arranged which came and from noon started playing various tunes.

Dress code for bara khana is usually white kameez shalwar with black waist coat and shoes. Wing Commanders from Dommel Nissar, Mirkhani were there Lt Col Sarfraz of No.6 Wing at Garm Chasma was also there so were two three staff officers, subedar majors of wings and the corps subedar major. They had come from Chitral {on official vehicles}. The ground was well lit and seating arrangements were made.

I met almost all, now the subedar majors know me and we had small talk about the history and their area. The food was good but it was not that rich as I had expected rather bit low and one reason which I ponder was that for baara khanna one has to plan few days in advance; it is also possible that this was the standard. Again referring to army fables; the good baara khanna is the one in which legs of lamb or goat are roasted; they were not here tonight.

Chitrali music after the dinner was good, artillery officers from Mirkhani also joined in rather bit late as Captain Tajdar narrated that they thought that dinner is in their honour thus they were late. Subedar Akhtar of Mirkhani enriched my knowledge about Chitrali Sitar by stating that it is made by three companies all based in his village Sonoghar. He also commented on the various tunes which were being played. Chitrali music is soft in nature and so is the dance which was being performed by the various Scouts at random. Dance is slow but it gathers momentum, each tune was of two or three minutes. Dancer had slow body movement and wiggling of body but nothing lewd and nothing very fast all in

all soothing and relaxing but all this changed with an army soldier of 42 AK jumping in and to my opinion rather disturbed the scout's rhythm but it was part of game.

In the end the farewell speech of wing commander and giving of gifts by the wing and other wings, they all were carpets mostly hand woven; nothing to wing by the outgoing wing commander. Later a melee of dance in which all officers also joined in, the two bands the army and scouts small party playing together with no clear music but it was fun. In the end the wing commander was towed by ropes while he was sitting in the jeep being driven by the new wing commander and troops pulling the ropes. Captain Tajdar narrated that only last year in Kashmir one such vehicle toppled over the rocks while it was being towed . Classic Murphy Law.

## **EPILOGUE. A Convoluted History of Chitral.**

After almost a fortnight and with excessive studies, interviews, travelling and observing I have reached certain key notes about Chitral. The people as a thumb rule do not talk about their history and when they do talk it is nothing more than what is written about Chitral by the Chitralis which primarily revolves around the princes or royal history; something very similar to England.

Primarily there are two distinct river namely the Yarkhun and TirschMir or Lotkow which confluence just a mile upstream at Chitral, the rivers which are joined by many small tributaries which all are fresh water glaciated water or spring , compartmentalises the state into varying valleys but mainly the north & south. Religiously people of Chitral have Kafir among them and there is no logic not to believe that majority of population at one time was Kafir. The upper Chitral is predominantly Ismaili by faith and lower Chitral is Sunni. Upper Chitral have influence of Tajikistan, Badkshan and Pamir where as the lower Chitral is under the influence of pathan culture or Kunar culture which creeps up stream through the Chitral river. Historically there were two major ruling dynasties the rais which were ruling Chitral from 1000 -1530 AD and Kator which through a coup d eta came into power in 1530 AD, it coincides with Mughul rise to power and kators as such are linked with the Mughuls. These two ruling classes have bitter and bloody history trail like all other princely houses all over India or for that matter in world.

Socially the society comprises of the ruling families known as adamzads, arbabzads come next in ladder followed by the fakir & maskin. This is the issue as no one will admit that he is from lowest rung. Then there is religious factions and persecutions; as late as in 1926 when the Mehtar carried out an all out effort to convert the Ismailis living in upper Chitral into sunnism , it happened after his hajj. The persecution was stopped only after the intervention of British political officials.

The 3000 odd Kafir living on the southern bank of River Chitral are another enigma, they at one time between 1000-1300 AD were powerful rulers of Chitral although no unified command yet they have a history of standing up to the Mughuls and later to the Afghans, however in the end they were almost exterminated in 1895 but managed to hold on to a narrow strip of land in lower Chitral. Majority of these Kafir embraced Islam and are known as sheikhs in society. Their women still stroll the Chitral bazaar wearing colourful attire hardly anyone can point out a Kafir man as he wears no distinct dress item.

Headgear is very important as is seen in all along Durand Line, Chitralis wear white headgear made of Chitrali Patti, Swati also wears the same design and so does Gilgitis and even Mahsuds wear the same kind of headgear with minor design and wearing pattern. A Pathan seldom wears this headgear

he has its own white skull cap in summer, Gilgiti cap is similar in cloth but it is smaller in circumference and it does not have the cloth hanging out from the edges as in case of Chitralis. There is only difference in cloth as far as the Swati is concerned and also the colour, Swati wears rather grey colour.

#### Polo & Music.

Polo in true sense is the identification of Chitral, it is played here in almost all village 'maidan' the way it was invented and was played millenniums ago; no rules. Polo took birth in Central Asia with the domestication of this fine specimen of animal, the horse. These mountainous breed was and is still regarded as the best in the world in terms of stamina and intelligence. Key to success of Aryan was their mastery and love for horse, they initiated the very first Blitzkrieg in the history almost 1000 BC and kept rolling by Mongols and Turks most famous being Mahmud of Ghazna, Chengiz Khan, Halugu Khan, Tamerlane and Babar of Fergana. Game itself originated as a thrill & fun which comes up naturally when Aryans felt the speed, excitement and competitiveness while galloping on the steppes. Mongols particularly Tamerlane was fond of playing it with the skulls of the vanquished. Buzkashi is the only other game which can rival Polo fervor. It is another strange twist of history that both these games are played in traditional pattern {which is nothing other than living natural} only in Hindu Kush {Badakshan, Chitral & Gilgit}. Polo is not played in Badakshan and Buzkashi is unseen in Chitral.

During summer which is short but warm, at evening one comes across Polo players trotting through Shahi Bazar towards one of the three Polo Grounds in Chitral, same scene can be seen in almost all villages of upper Chitral. Grounds are uneven, barely wide and long enough in high mountainous altitude of Chitral to allow any kind of safety to the horses, players or spectators. It is like an arena, small few feet high stony walls with sheer falls, defiles, gushing water from gorges, back ground of mountain, centuries old maple or walnut trees adding to the scenery. There is no restriction on number of players, game duration lasts for 45 minutes to one hour without any change or rest for horse or player. There is no protective headgear or clothing, you just sit on the horse and gallops after the ball, hit it as far as as you can {that is if other team players allow you to come even near the ball}. Pushing the horse, blocking the shot, cutting the line is all fair. In fact Polo is the most Gentlemen game in true sense, the opponents test you but intention is never to hurt or harm the player or horse. On 14<sup>th</sup> September 1981 Subedar Sultan Ali Shah had a fatal blow during a polo match between Chitral Scouts and a local team, he took his last breath at 1330 hours on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1981.

Music is another important segment of local life and especially no Polo game is complete without the presence of two instruments the drum and flute. They are soft in nature and provides perfect ambience to the occasion. Spectators sitting on the walls practically feel the heat of horses, their eyes remained glue on the ball for their own safety. When a player scores a goal then he picks the ball and strikes back towards other end, it has its own glamour. The player taking the shot after the goal does it with his own signature tune 'Tampuq'. The musicians knows it and when the sound travels in air it lets the mother, sister, wife and other beloved ones who have not been able to witness the game to know that he has scored a goal. Surnai, Damama and Dhool are three main music instruments for dances, Sitar and duff are for vocal programme. Ponwar is the welcome tune for guests, Jangwar is military tune played while going for war. Bari Waziwar & Shahbaz are tunes to start a ceremony, Shustwar is played on marriages while Ghalwar is a call to all to gather for polo match, Alghaniwar is Pathan style dance tune while Dani is a highland style of dance music and in the end Suzi is played to mark the end of ceremonies.

Shandur annual Polo match between Chitral & Gilgit is a classic, at 12000 feet high plateau which connects and act as the natural, historical and administrative boundaries of these two rival riparian mountainous cultures The River Gilgit & River Chitral {Yarkhun}. It started in 1903 and oral history traces a love string behind it, one of the princesses condition of marriage was ‘the one who wins at Shandur’. another oral tradition traces its back ground to ancient times when the village democracy resorted to Polo for arbitration rather than the violence. { Chitral & Gilgit have one of the lowest crime rate in the region}. In one of the epic matches which natives still love to talk about was on 28<sup>th</sup> august 1966, final was played between the Chitral Scouts and Northern Scouts, it was won by the Gilgit team, who had earlier defeated the Chitral Scouts in the preliminary match as well ‘ Gilgitis were no doubt better than us in every department of the game and it is a fact that we have to learn a lot from them’<sup>14</sup>. In that year {1966} polo season galloped off on 12<sup>th</sup> October, Chitral Scouts entered two teams, first team was headed by commandant Lieutenant Colonel Shaukat Sultan which fought its way to finals but eventually lost to the all times winner Zagrazar, the deputy commissioner’s team comprising of natives. The other polo team of Chitral Scouts lost in opening match to Balach another local team. This was Lieutenant Colonel Shaukat Sultan’s alst polo tournament as he was posted back to army in November 1966 after completion of his tenure, ‘ He was our commandant, infact a very special commandant, but it is as an elder brother that we miss him and shall remember him most’<sup>15</sup>. He was replaced with an equally special commandant, Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Sher Khan, Sitara I Jurat.

1986 Polo match at Shandur was historic , President of Pakistan General Zia Ul Haq graced the occasion and Chitral Scouts commandant Lieutenant Colonel Murad Nayyar was the man behind this. Since then it has become the most prestigious event in world Polo calendar. It is played between Chitral Polo Team and Gilgit Polo Team. At Shandur Polo is played in most natural manner, duration is 45 minutes without any break, player cannot change his pony, a pony has to sustain the entire duration. If a player gets injured then other player can replace him but pony will not be change; on the other hand if pony himself becomes injured than the opponent team has to play with one less player. It is in fact a test of horse and rider both in stamina and endurance apart from intelligence.

Chitral is not famous for horses, they all come from Badakshan in past and now from Punjab.; thus it is logical to conclude that where as Polo originates from Persian speaking Aryans the Buzkashi belongs to Turk. Within Chitral , Polo is played in upper Chitral only which is more Persian oriented culture, in lower Chitral, it is rarely seen. Kafirs have no tradition of playing Polo and neither it is played in the former Kafir valleys. Game is alive in Chitral, it is not dying neither its future is in danger. It is the pride of Chitral, Chitral Scouts and natives are keeping it alive; it provides them much needed adrenalin in a non violent manner.

## Headgear

Chitrali head gear is very peculiar and the identity of the area it is part of Chitral Scouts ceremonial uniform. Every visiting army chief has worn it notably President General Zia Ul Haq, General Waheed Kakkar and President General Mushhaarff. Lady Diana has adorned it so has Prince Karim Agha Khan. It is part of uniform, now a day is it worn on ceremonial occasions. The cap itself is made of Chitrali cloth and the Village Mogh near Garm Chasma is famous for its quality. Cap is made custom, taking the measurement of the head and then cap is sewn; it is available readymade as well. In Chitrali language it is called ‘Pakool’. The plume is made of duck which is known as Mundhaqq

<sup>14</sup> Frontier Corps Newsletter 1966, Chitral Scouts, page 31.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

in local language, it is a seasonal bird , however from 2002 onwards the use of natural feather has been prohibited keeping in view the endangered specie. The plume now is artificial, however the original plume is known as Putcch in Chitrali language.

The cap is white in colour, which is rolled up consuming more than a meter of cloth, presently it is not issued free of cost to the scouts they have to purchase it from open market where it can cost 250-500 rupees. The Gilgit Scouts have identical headgear also the only difference is in the way of making the cap, Chitrali cap is more heavy and have more twinges as compares to the Gilgit Scouts ; which is bit narrow and its top cloth does not spill over the rim. Mahsuds wear the same kind of headgear with minor design and wearing pattern. A Pathan seldom wears this headgear he has its own white skull cap in summer. Mahsud style of putting on cap is distinct, they place it in middle of head {Ahmed Shah Mahsud ‘Lion of Panjsher’ made it famous}. The Chitral Scouts mascot is Markhoor which is again an endangered specie now; It has distinctive cloth background which denotes the wing colours {presently there are six wings in Chitral Scouts}

Language.

All Chitralis are not same, their faces, colour of eyes are different and so are their customs and traditions, however the language and religion is the biggest binding and after it the Chitral Scouts bondage is the most powerful institution in the Chitral. Khowar is the language of Chitral River from snout till Mirkani in the south with varying dialect, in its pure form it is being spoken in the upper Chitral in Mulkhaw and Torkhaw area ; ironically it does not have any written characters thus Persian remained the official language since early days later replaced by Urdu and English. Khowar is like Urdu because it is also a combination of Persian, Turkish and Sanskrit language. Till mid seventies a journal in Khowar language was monthly published by the Government of Pakistan to promote the language. In Lotkow, Madaglasht and Kalashgum the dialect is different. Persian is still spoken and understood by the aristocracy in the Madaglasht in the Shishikuh Valley, Yudgah is spoken in upper Lotkow Valley above Parabek, Dangarik or Palola is spoken in Ashret, Kalkatak , Beroi and Nastiwar or Gawarbati is the language of Arandu. These varieties of language when seen in the context of the Waziristan which has much more area but only two dialect reinforces the theory that Chitral has been abode of many races and cultures which with the passage of time adopted a working pattern rather amicably. The abundance of fresh water and green pastures all along the various streams provided a solid logic against the utter use of violence for the land as observe in the Waziristan.

Hunting & Fishing .

Chitral is famous for the hunting , fishing and bird shooting. It is a migratory station for the Siberian birds and as much are much awaited by all. The hunting has its own customs and traditions in chitral, men spent much money in the hunting season often falling into debt as well. The main cost is in the construction of a hunting piquet at the river and other lakes . Hunter then sits inside it at early morning, float the decoys and then it is a matter of patience before cranes starts landing. In summer almost everyone carry a fishing stick/rod and fish is also available in market. The protein requirement of natives is thus fulfilled through this activity. Big sport is highly restricted and permit is very expensive, snow leopards are quite common sight.

## Chitral Scouts and War against Militancy. 2001-2014.

### History of Chitral Scouts Wings

The basic organization of a fighting unit in Chitral Scouts is a wing which is equivalent to a light infantry battalion commanded by a lieutenant colonel. It has a strength of 640 men, organized into four companies each company having three platoons and each platoon having three sections, ten men makes one section. Each wing has its own headquarters commanded by a lieutenant colonel, subedar major is the senior most officer from junior commissioned officers. Each wing is mobile, lightly equipped, armed with light integral weapons and transport. Each wing has its own colour which is depicted on the shoulder titles and cap patch. Wings rotate among the forts of Chitral for a stay of two years in each. Inter posting among the wings for the scouts can take place only with the permission of commandant; usually a scout spent all his service in one wing

**1 Wing:** Senior most wing of Chitral Scouts, it was known as No.13 Wing and in 1990 was reverted to its old and present designation. Veteran of 1919 and Kashmir Wars. In June 1999 it entered the operational area in Kargil. Since 2000, the wing was deployed in Dir Maidan operation where it was placed under command Dir Scouts since September 2009.



## 2 Wing

It was an integral part of Chitral Scouts, in 1989 its designation was changed from No.14 Wing to No.2 Wing. It has served at Arandu, Warsak, Mirkani, Drosh and Chakdara. Wing has also served at FCNA, {Chilas 1993, Piun, September 1994, Hamzagond May 1999 and Piun June 2002}. In June 2007 No.2 Wing replaced No.3 Wing at Swat, headquarters were established at Kabal. Nasr performed duties with headquarters and later another five months at a post at Sarsanai. From here the scouts moves to Tutain Banda with a Baluch Regiment, the post was almost attacked daily by the snipers which took the life of Lance Naik Qadir Khan and seriously wounded Sepoy Tahir Shah. Apart from snipers the post was subject to suicide attack as well. Post commander Subedar Muhammad Daud and Naib Subedar Shehr Gulab displayed extra ordinary display of leadership and kept the morale high. Another volatile post was at Ayub Bridge , it was attacked by an explosive laden suicide vehicle which caused shahadat of Sepoys Wali khan, Haji Rehmat and Imtiaz with further ten more scouts getting wounded. Later the wing was move to Bajaur. On 7<sup>th</sup> January 2008 seven persons of the wing deployed at Ziarat Post died when they all acme under an avalanche.

In October 2010, the wing moves back to Mirkhani. (Chitral).

**3 Wing:** No.3 wing was raised on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1986 and re-designated as No.3 Wing in 1989. Wing has served under FCNA in August 1991-1992, May 2000- June 2001; from where it was rushed to Kitkot in Bajaur . during the Pakistan-India escalation in 2001, the Wing remained deployed t Baddomallhi in Punjab for over three months. Earthquake relief operation in 2005 was actively participated by the wing at Shangla, Ghari Hhabib Ullah and Manshehra. 3 Wing was ordered to move to Swat on a very short notice in September 2007. Initially wing was deployed in Mingora and surroundings. Later wing was deployed within area of responsibility of three army infantry brigades while wing headquarters was established at Kabal. Security of two main bridges (Ayub and Shamoza Bridge) was the responsibility of wing. Besides number of cordon and search operations, one suicidal vehicle was also identified and destroyed with bombers on 18 December 2007. The wing is in Bajaur Agency operation under command Bajaur Scouts since Oct 2010.

**4 Wing:** The wing was raised in 1986 as No.16 Wing and later re-designated to present in 1989. In 1992 the wing was placed under command FCNA for two years where it served at Siari, Olding and Hamzigund sectors. A year of internal security at Gilgit in 1998 and another at Bajaur in 1999 before taking over the Mirkani Fort from No.5 Wing in April 2001. In May

2003 the Wing again move into FCNA for a year. Wing has been in Milward (Khyber Agency) and performed operational duties in a very befitting manner from September 2007 – October 2009. Wing also took part in the bloody battle of Inayat Qilla in Bajour , February 2009.

**5 Wing:** The wing performed their duties in Swat and Dir Maidan Operation very well. It spent better half of 2001 in FCNA again moved into FCNA in August 2004. In 2008 Wing was deployed at Chakdara however its two companies were deployed at Shakas Fort in Bara Valley. This wing started advance on 26 April 2009 from Timergara and cleared area up to Lal Qila, heavy exchange of fire took place with miscreants and eight scouts including one junior commissioned officer embraced shahadat on same day. Incident took place at Hayasarai {Lower dir} on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2009. Wing despite the heavy casualties stood on its ground. In another incident near Kaladak on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009, an IED caused four fatal casualties. Kalapni Post also took its toll when two scouts embraced shahadat on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2009. Another scout of the wing serving with Special operation Group {SOG} Naik Hakim embraced shahadat near Rustam on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2009. Before coming to Drosh in 2013 , wing had served at Chakdara and Bajaur..

**6 Wing** 6 Wing was raised on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1989 at Drosh with Major Afzal as the first wing commander. They were stationed at Chakdara before taking part in Bara operation {1990} followed by Malakand Opeartion {1991}. It served in FCNA from August 1997 – September 1998. and had another tour of duty in the asme operational area in June 2006. After two years of stay at Mastuj it was inducted in Dara adam Khael in 2009 and remained actively deployed till May 2012.

## WAR AGAINST MILITANCY

Chitral Scouts is actively participating in the ongoing operations against terrorism since last three years. Chitral Scouts has kept its flag high in all operational areas i.e. Swat, Bajaur, Spina Thana (Darra Adam Khel), Dir Maidan and Orakzai Agency. Chitral comparatively had remained safe from the flames of terrorism. On 12<sup>th</sup> July 2007 , Mortar battery of Chitral Scouts was inducted in Bajaur and two months later No.4 Wing and two companies of No.5 Wing move from Chitral to Fort Milward in Bara Valley undercommand mahsud scouts. These were the two initial deployments of Chitral Scouts as part of war against terror. In October 2007 No.3 wing alongwith one company each from No.4, 5 and No.2 Wings left Chitral for taking part in Operation Mountain Viper in Swat. At that time Chakdara Fort was under occupation of No.5 Wing Chitral Scouts. During Operation Mountain Viper , no less than eight post were being manned by the wing which included Landakai, Birikot, Birikot Top, Ghundai, Ghalagai, Gora Tai, Gamin Bridge and Churchill Post. Both wings of Chitral Scouts {No.3 Wing at Swat and No.5 Wing at Chakdara} performed exceptionally well. Balagram, Kanju, Kabal and Ayub Bridge are now part of Chitral Scouts history. The pattern of insurgency revolved around keeping the roads open and maintaining the morale of civilian population and own military through aggressive patrolling and show of force. Sepoy Mohsin Ali was injured

at Kabal and havildar Buzurg Muhammad embraced shahadat at Kabal on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008 when miscreants launched attack on their post while No.2 Wing was in the process of relieving No.3 Wing at Kabal.

Eight scouts were injured on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2008 at Kabal, due to miscreants launched attack on Banda post, this post again came under attack on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2008. In November the very first suicide attack on Chitral Scouts was launched, on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008 at 20150 hours a suicide vehicle blew itself at Ayub Bridge Post.

Operation Sirat Ul Mustaqeem started in Khyber Agency on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2008 and No.4 Wing participated in it where as one company of No.6 Wing was deployed at Bajaur. On the very first day of 2009, Naik Hamid Khan and Sepoy Rehmat Gul were abducted near Batagram, they were later shot dead by the miscreants

It was in August 2011 when hell broke loose in lower Chitral when the physical attack was launched by the Afghan Bashgol. Chitral Scouts is organised into six wings, with a mountain artillery battery and mounted infantry as integral components. Overall command is with a colonel who acts as Commandant. Chitral Scouts was the first corps to have a colonel as commandant. Each wing is commanded by a lieutenant colonel, having four companies each commanded by a subedar. Although these companies should be commanded by regular officers but there is always a shortage of them. Furthermore each company comprise of four platoons each having three sections. Platoons are commanded by a havildar. Strength of a wing varies from 600-690 scouts. These wings rotate after three-four years among the various stations in Chitral like Drosh, Mirkhani, Dommel Nisar, Mastuj, Chitral and Garam Chashma. They manned posts which are outlying like Broghul Pass, practically they have posts on every pass and in every valley. Task of post vary for instance the posts along Drosh-Mirkhani-Dommel Nisar and Arandu have more concentration towards anti-smuggling role where as in Broghul and Shah Salim Pass they are more like listening post. These are in fact the symbol of state. These posts provide search and rescue in winter, disseminate education & medical to locals; overall peace and tranquillity seldom required any scout action in the area.

The pattern and conduct of war is unconventional, miscreants are small in number and mostly based in Waziristan, from there it slowly and gradually started affecting adjoining areas. These miscreants are not under any uniform command rather it is the last two hundred years of history being repeated again. Dir, Swat, Buner were the strongholds of Ahmed Shah Barelvi's followers {1825-1860} and they had nothing to do with the Wazirs. Violence in Kurram and Orakzai Agency {Orakzai Agency was carved out of Kurram in 1974} is mainly around sectarianism. Bajaur was also once part of Khyber Agency and violence has its roots in Afghanistan. But by and large the violence is restricted to Pashtu speaking areas and even more prominently in tribal agencies. Maulana Fazalullah of Swat is the one calling the shots in the area.

Violence within Chitral has always been restricted to the Arandu-Drosh axis with the exception of 1926 when Lotkora and upper Chitral were targeted by the Mehtar on religious grounds. Mostly it is the Afghan issue which is the root cause, the issue again is not at national

or international level rather it is the local geography & history which is the firewood of the violence. 18<sup>th</sup> Century campaigns for conquest of land or the crown or even that of egos have almost exterminated in last fifty odd years. The Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1977 was a big test but even then Chitral was a normal district. Russian used to bomb Arandu and Drosh but no physical attack was launched either by them or the Afghans or the Bashgol on their behalf.

In last twenty years the sectarianism has emerged as the biggest threat to the tranquillity of millenniums in Chitral. Sunni, Shia & Ismailis have been living here in such harmony which only recently was matched only by Gilgit but peace has gone from areas east of Chitral. Similarly not long ago , only few years ago the foreigners were roaming in the bazaars of Chitral, lone woman travelling at night with porters, scholars coming from around the world to explore the Kalash Valley; all this including the mega projects like Lowari tunnel and Goleen Hydel power project are now under threat of miscreants attacks.

Chitral Scouts Artillery Battery, mortar battery, signal platoon, military platoons have all been supporting the operations against the militancy. It is the beauty of Chitral Scouts that despite all the ongoing operations the life still maintains its normal pace. Schools have been upgraded, houses for shaheed have been constructed, constructing parks for children, conducting the annual Polo at Shandur{it was not held in 2013 }, sports tournament, promotions of scouts, training for recruits, dine out of officers and subedars, expansion, extension, preservation of forts and old heritage. Free medical camps for the local and providing protection to all the major projects in Chitral. Protection, promotion and nurturing of Kalash people & culture is also part of Chitral Scouts .

## Athanasius of Bambouret . September 2009.

Kafirs of Kalash claims to be descendent of Greeks and it is very much possible also because Alexander The Great after his retreat had divided the India into two of his lieutenants who remained in power for another three hundred years . The way to Oxus from Indus or vice versa has to pass through the Kafiristan; not necessarily the Chitral River. Thus Greeks or Hellias as they call themselves now have developed a cultural heritage with them , it serves both as Greeks are also looking for something to revive its old glorious history and Kafirs looking for more attention. Greeks have developed the museum, water supply in the Bhumbirit which is the largest of Kafir village, community toilets and few other minor things. Mr Lerounid Athanasius was one such person who was living in the village since 2002. On 7/8 September 2009 at midnight, two men overpowered the Head Constable Zafar who was there as part of security to Athanasius; heading four men. It is worth mentioning that not before these, had ever any policeman stayed a night here because of the crime situation. They at times would close the police station at sunset, hand over the keys to the local headman and then come back in the morning after. Zafar died when he hit the ground, other two policemen were injured and Mr Athanasius was taken away.

Chitral Scouts platoon under the command of Major Naseeb arrived at first light , all bridges and tracks leading to Afghanistan were sealed, border police was alerted and local jirga was called and addressed by Major Naseeb. Residents of Bhumbirit, Ayun, Urtsun & Birir serving in Chitral Scouts were sent on leave to gather the information from the villages..

The first lead came from Noor Muhammad a local who disclosed that he had provided mules for some Afghans

*‘ I was going from my village Otak Banda to grazing ground at Waler Banda with my mules when I encountered a dozen Afghans along with a person wearing a chaddar moving under their protection they were climbing up, the man with chaddar was walking with a stick other were carrying weapons, one an told me rather ordered that he is their officer pointing towards the man wearing chaddar and I should take him upon on my mule ,I refused and was taken along on gun point...after some time my animal also got tired and I was ordered to carry the officer on body which I did..later I really had to touch their feet to let me go which they did. It was Ramadan and they were eating and offered me the same but I declined. I had talk with them and asked about the person , they narrated that they have abducted it from Bhumbirit and in the process had killed one policeman also, they had wrapped the bombs around their body and i think even the bag which they were carrying was full of bombs ’.*

One cannot ascertain the truth of this but it was certain that they adopted the Parapit Pass route to reach Patti Gol. Commandant Colonel Rizwan Rafi { former special services group} visited the area and held the jirga and was of the opinion that local residents of Bhumbirit & Shekhandeh are involved{it proved correct later}. The parties of local were sent to Nuristan on 10<sup>th</sup> September comprising of local jirga members for release of Athanasius , one left on vehicle via Arandu-Birkot route the other two on foot via Zingoor Pass.

**On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2010**, the jirga came back with letters from Athanasius, which was delivered to the Chitral Scouts in which Athanasius wrote ‘ I am fine here until today..Taliban demands 20,000 US\$ and freedom of their prisoners’. Two of the messengers sent to the local Taliban leader had an unfortunate accident as one was killed when NATO aircraft bombed the area and other was seriously injured.

Mr Athanasius was later released by the Taliban after Greek Embassy agreed to pay the ransom. Prisoners were not released, he was handed over to Chitral Scouts.

**Zhangshall Abduction.** On 28<sup>th</sup> November 2010, eight men were abducted by the Afghans while they were cutting woods , they abducted eight woodcutters and left one with the message that Zhangshall belongs to them and no wood cutting is allowed . Later all the wood cutters were released who narrated that they were taken into Gawardesh in Afghanistan where the **abductees** simply got tired of feeding them and thus left them one by one. The woodcutters were hired by the locals for wood cutting and had come to the area on vehicles. Lower Chitral is famous for the wood thus a ‘wood mafia’ has emerged. This small incident highlights the intriguing face of the conflict. Everything which happens does not necessarily have roots to extremism.

## **Ursun Post - 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2011.**

On the night of 1 May 2011 the miscreants belonging to the Swat chapter attacked the post which was held by 30 Scouts of Chitral at 0200 hours, miscreants were in strength of 20-30 who had infiltrated through the Paith Zom Pass and Gambir Gri Pass to cross the frontier and then used Banjal to reach the post. The initial plan of the miscreants was to attack silently but they were discovered by the alert sentry and that resulted in exchange of heavy fire. Five rockets fired by them landed inside the post, this fire duel continued for another three hours before the miscreants were forced to flee. The miscreants while fleeing attacked one post of border police and took away eight SMGs along with three policemen of border police as hostage. Miscreants were believed to be part of Faizullah Group<sup>16</sup>.

## **Darashot- The Longest Day.**

On 27<sup>th</sup> August 2011, the Afghan miscreants attack seven different posts of Chitral Scouts in Arandu – Mirkani area spread over 32 Kilometres, the crow distance between them is 22 kilometres; soon after Fajr prayers. It was the first such attack of this magnitude since 1919 and when seen in present context of war against militancy this was the dragging of Chitral into the Durand Line affairs from which it has been able to keep a safe distance since 1895.

The attack lasted till noon, post which came under the attack were Ursoon, Mirkani, Dommel Nisar & Langurbat with heavy fire, mortars, rocket propelled grenade launchers, all which is usual in the tribal attacks on the posts all along the front and physical attack was launched upon the Gudigar, Darashot and Kauti. It is the pattern of the Taliban in which the attack is launched on a group of posts, keeping some under the fire and attacking one particular physically. It creates delaying action upon the defender especially at night in mountainous terrain with very poor communication tracks. Chitral Scouts stood out the test and fought bravely holding the posts intact especially at Darashot.

People living in the area especially at Nuristan, Shekhandeh, Bhumbirit Rumbur, Ursoon, Ginjirate Kuh, Arandu, Chitral are relatives to each other since centuries and it they have been travelling almost daily to meet each other and carry out the chores of centuries old rituals of trade through frequented and unfrequented routes<sup>17</sup>. The district administration had established the contacts with the people living in Nuristan for maintaining peace in the area and not allowing the Taliban or hard core Islamic militants in the area; so far it had worked for almost eleven years a remarkable achievement when seen in the context of overall devastation of social fibre in the frontier and other regions of Pakistan.

Miscreants had the concentration area at Gawardesh from where they crossed into the Chitral boundaries through Pathkun Bro, Paitazom, Kauti Gol, Gambiri Gri and Chulu Gol. They were a mixture of Afghani and Nuristani men wearing stolen NATO uniform and definitely supported by the Afghan National Army personnel as one of the dead body later

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<sup>16</sup> District Coordinating Officer Chitral, Letter No.4225 dated 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010.

<sup>17</sup> DCO Chitral, Letter No.2818/DCO/dated 6<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

revealed. It is highlighted that in May same year five posts of Afghans were wiped out by the miscreants which Afghan alleged to be based in Pakistan. The warning about the impending attacks was received almost a month ago with rumours coming from the lips of the travellers and the centuries old natives' way of information. What was surprising, was the magnitude as almost seven posts were hit simultaneously. The quick reaction forces were made ready at nodal points and wings were warned to keep a high alert and this in the end saved the day. The four worst hit posts were Darashot, Gudibar, Kauti & Langurbat.

At Darashot thirteen individuals of the post including post commander embraced shahadat, yet they did not surrendered it, Sepoy Nasir manned the machine gun till 1300 hours when the relief force came on the post. Attack was led by the Ghazwan and Zubair both local miscreant commanders with Zubair getting injured also.; all in all 32 Taliban were killed, the remaining while fleeing burnt the hanging bridge on River Chitral thus practically bringing the chase to an end. They had looted the weapons as well which they took it back via Langurbat, Arandu, Khur and Dab.

## Sepoy Nasir Min Ullah- Last Man Standing

On 27<sup>th</sup> August which was 27 of Ramadan also, Sepoy Nasir after taking his sehay along with six other scouts was reciting the Holy Koran. No joy can match than reciting the greatness, favour, love of our creator, sitting at a small plateau overlooking the calm, green valley with River Chitral flowing with all the glaciated water, It was dawn with cool air blowing lightly and gently; Ramadan was coming to an end in another two days thus festivity of Eid was already in air and in hearts of scouts. Many scouts had gone on Eid leave yesterday thus bringing the manning level at certain posts to unauthorised level.

Darashot is a small hamlet on the western bank of River Chitral, a small wooden hanging bridge allows the fifty odd inhabitants to cross over. On the other hand it allows the tribes, men, scouts to cross over and get into Afghanistan, area is thickly vegetated with olive trees, boulders, stones, defiles with odd patches of level field. Darashot was a post a small post and not a small piquet, it was a check point established at the eastern end of bridge, it was nothing more than a room with two tents pitched alongside having ammunition, living, cooking, for twenty scouts in them, commanded by Subedar Niat Ghazi. The main aim was to keep the wooden hanging bridges under observation, checking everyone physically who crosses it and at dusk to close it. A procedure being followed since 1901 in the area when ever there was any threat from Afghans. Historically River Chitral bifurcates the Hindu raj like a peach line. Area on west was Kafiristan, extending from Arandu all along the west bank, reaching a conical omega bend at Nagur & Mirkhani, and encompassing Ayun, very few crossing points not more than a dozen are available.

Darashot was a complex of two posts, one which was at the bridge and other across the narrow track and higher on the plateau; in a small stone room which was built by the herdsman for self and animals protection. There were six scouts manning this out post, they had no line communication with the post down below. They daily had to go down to fetch the fresh ration

or cooked food from the main post. Water was another issue, drinking water was also fetched from down below. Two sentries would give the duty at one time, but it was nothing alarming. There was one machine gun, one rocket launcher with six rounds, and four rifles at the post, it was a section strength weapons and ammunition.

*‘ I heard a shot and I inquired from my comrade who was standing and looking at the vast, dimly lit frontier with weapon in his hand, I got up and walked towards him , that is when the first major burst of fire opened up, it included machine gun, with rocket launcher noise overpowering all other; they had hit the ammunition tent and now the crackling of rifle fire. It all took two minutes, now all of my comrades were out , running with the weapons and occupying the positions. None of us was sure as to what had actually happened and where should we fire in retaliation ’.*<sup>18</sup>

Machine gun could not fire down below because of ‘line of fire’ which created a dead zone. In another few minutes situation became clear, our post down below was hit with rockets and small arms fire, enemy had established fire base on the western bank and now they were running across the bridge. Sepoy Nasir narrates

*‘ I fired a rocket at the bridge to destroy it thus blocking the invasion but I missed it by few feet. Within seconds they were on our bank, now fire started coming on our locality too. There was no pause everything was happening in quick time ’*

Apparently miscreants initially had very little or no information about the post at higher ground, it had affected their plan; they now ascended up and engaged the post. By 0710 hours two scouts had embraced shahadat at the Darashot Post No.2 and almost all were wiped out at the main post down below. By 0745 hours the battle was going on at the higher post, miscreants apparently had achieved their aim but now wanted to wipe out the complex completely. One reason was that they had suffered casualties due to the fire coming from Nasir’s post.

*‘ In another hour I was the only one left alone at the post, around me were the dead bodies lying of my five comrades, I lost all sense of proportion, I became full of rage, I knew sooner or later a bullet is going to end my life like they taken away the lives of these five scouts. I was firing from different positions with different weapons which were lying around. I gradually started taking the dead bodies inside the room, I did not want them to be beheaded. ’*

Sepoy Nasir took the position inside the hut and relied the fire, soon two rockets came and hit his bunker, room was full of smoke and nothing was visible, two Taliban came rushing in following the rocket burst, Nasir saw just a silhouette and fired back, it hit the Taliban in head and he died instantly. Now the battle took another dimension, Taliban were now eager and desperate to get the dead body back and Nasir was holding the post single handed. Duel continued for another hour, and then Taliban offered him safe passage if he allows them to take the dead body, Nasir fired a burst in reply. Taliban made another attempt to enter, destroy the hut but failed, by mid day Nasir was left with only seven bullets of rifle. At this point Taliban vacated the post and the area as rescue was approaching from Mirkhani. Nasir was ignorant

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Naik Nasir in September 2013 at Mirkani.



about all this and when he heard the voices of men asking him to come out he refused and it was only when his own wing mate came and he recognised their voice did he came out.

Sepoy Nasir was promoted and then sent on United Nations Peace Corps in Sierra Leone. He have one more brother who is also serving in Chitral Scouts.

**Orakzai Agency.** A company strength ex Chitral Scouts was sent to Orakzai Agency in May 2010 for “ Operation Khawa Bade Sham”. The company performed exceptionally well and repulsed a number of attacks of the miscreants inflicting heavy casualties to them while defending ‘Top’ in Daburi. On night 21/22 June 2010, the company repulsed the major miscreants attack causing them 43 dead and 56 injured. Own losses were four shaheed (including two from Punjab Regiment) and sixteen injured.

## KHYBER RIFLES; Again, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2013

I came yesterday to Khyber Rifles in a hurry, nothing serious. I had a good interaction of over an hour with IGFC , he was composed as usual and bursted his heart out about the Jamat Islami's statement about the status of martyrdom regarding army and uniform jawans. It has been a horrific, idiotic, insulting , deregoratory, thoughts expressed by an sick amn of evil repute the monkey looking Maulana Munawwar Hassan the head of Jamat Islami political party in an interview or so called atlk show on television. Few days back the even more nefarious Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman alis Moulvi diesel has declared that even if a dog dies in an American Drone attack then he is a martyr. All this fuss is because the Hakim Ul mehsud the leader of the Taliban have been killed in a Drone attack last week. It was a sigh of relief, a nationalistic pride restored, revenge of Major General Sanaullah ahs been taken ,score settled. This has left a big paradigm in the overall situation. Moulvi Fazlullah of swat is the now new commanders of Taliban, he belongs to Swat. Chances are that the war will now ends soon because the leadership has gone out of the hands of the Wazirs and more specifically from Mehsuds. The history bears that whenever the insurgency has risen from the areas outside Waziristan then it has been eliminated quickly. 1992 insurgency and its suppression is the most logical evidence, it statted in Swat by the afther in law or relatives of current Fazlullah and it spraed soon in Malakand, Swat, Dir, Kohistan and adjoininig areas but was soon overcame by Major Genearl Naseer Ullah Babar and IGFC Major Genearl Ghazi ud din Rana, Baabr was te interior minister then.

Both these maulvis have shed away the veil of nationalism which they have been wearing deceptively since 1947, they do not believe in Pakistan, it is as simple as that. Pakistan represents a state in every sense both ideologically, religiously , as per international definition of state. Thus it is the state which decides about war, about use of violence and this si how state works. Within Pakistan or within any state there are always crisis. Killing any man on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1947 just because he is Hindu , Sikh cannot be overlooked by the local police inspector because this is how he is trained and this is how state organs work. By 1950 Pakistan was fully functional and organized country. In 1953 the movement for the declaration of qadianis as non Muslims started and it resulted in a martial law. It were the moulvi who wanted to stamp their version of a Muslim , it was headed by Madoodi the founder of Jamat Islami. Jamat and Madoodi never accepted Pakistan, they were against the very creation of Pakistan. It is irony of afte that the very people and parties who were not in favour of the Pakistan and called Mr Jinnah the founder of Pakistan as Kafir Azam later became the champion of Islam. It was in 1977 that the religious parties gathered under the banner of Pakistan national Alliance {PNA} and I have very little doubt tat it was backed by the army which was headed by General Zia; himself a fundamentalist and this is how

the political parties emerged as the winner. Later Jamaat was called as 'My B team' by General Zia. By 2000 the country was under the grip of Islamic fundamentalist, debate with liberals and moderators was undergoing as to what is wrong with religious parties being in power, in last ten years the hold of Islamic parties have gone stronger with every day yet they had never won any election in Pakistan, they came close to winning it in 2003 but had to settle for only Frontier Province. In 1970 they also had the power in same province, they lost it to Tehreek Insaaf in 2013 elections. Now Jamaat and Imran Khan who is a graduate of Oxford University and in 1970s and 80s the role model of my generation, the most loved male of our time, he later constructed a hospital with public charity in memory of his mother. He joined rather made an entry into politics in 1994-5, never won any seat except one in 2002 elections, boycotted the 2007 elections and won a handsome votes in 2013 which put his party in power in Frontier province. Before his marriage with Jemima Goldsmith almost half his age in 1995 he had a colourful life in which he fathered a girl from an American lady but Khan later denied being his father, it was only when the lady went to a court not for money but to give her daughter a name in society that Khan accepted being the father. A man who is more known for his foul language, vague statements and pessimistic approach in almost everything in life; Jamaat is his political ally in the frontier province and as such Khan has not bothered to give any statement denouncing what all has been uttered by the Jamaat in the talk show. Army very rightly asked for an apology from Jamaat and it was expected that Jamaat will realize the nonsense uttered by their chairman {amir} but the Jamaat came out even more lethal in response thus the whole country is now in a state of agitation over this.

I left baalhis at 1600 hours on Tuesday with an escort of two scouts and one driver. I wanted to avoid travelling on the Khyber after sunset but now I had no option, violation of SOP is the biggest cause of all major accidents in Frontier Corps and here I myself was in the act of doing the same. Got my things from the room, thanks, I just had got the new Bannu militia wollen shalwar kameez stitched only yesterday thus I was comfortable and confident. It is true that these proper clothes are the biggest source of self confidence at any pace in world but more specifically in frontier.

It took an hour and half just to reach the Hayatabad from the Frontier corps Mess at Kohat Road. Traffic haphazard, no sense, no markings on road, vehicles of all kind plying and trying to get through the small venturis. A by pass road has been constructed which allows the heavy traffic to by pass the city but for people living inside the city there is little respite. Peshawar practically have no underpass and even the lone flyover is too narrow at the turns and other is waiting completion since last year. Compare to Lahore, Peshawar looks medieval and backward even comparing to Rawalpindi. Driver was eager to drive fast but I checked him all the time. After crossing Hayatabad we passed through the old Bara where few shops were still open selling opium and hashish, the signboards and advertising of these small stalls is quite interesting, they highlight the quality of stuff and the effects.

The mounting skyline was visible although sun was almost about to set down, traffic was fluent, heavy trucks going to Kabul passed by, the incoming Pakistan-Afghanistan Dosti Bus service bus crossed us near Haaytabad. Road from Haaytabad till Jamrud is excellent and we were at Jamrud in no time. Jamrud Fort was on our right, bazaar and few stalls on our left. From Jamrud one road leads to Shilman area by passing the Afridis, I saw the road. From Jamrud onwards the darkness set in and road became a track. Driver had last driven here almost three years ago, other two companions or escorts included a havildar {Mohmand} and other was Bangash. Discussion started about the book, the culture, the tribal values and so on. My eyes were on the road and meanwhile I motivated these two to fight in case if we are abducted or ambushed. There is practically no reaction time in case one is ambushed here at Khyber at night on such broken tracks, we followed the lights of the leading vehicles. One now understands in earnest the values of tribal pacts with governments, there was very little chance of anything sinister happening to us because we were moving under the tribal protection { Kuki Khel}. Soon after entering

the pass we reached Ali Masjid gorge. In Chitral I was lucky to find an old military magazine of 1930 in which the episode of Ali Masjid in 1839 was given in detail by the eye witnesses account.

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Massacre at Ali Masjid ' Sally Musgrave'.

On 1<sup>st</sup> November 1839 the Ali Masjid fort which was under the Sikh occupation with one native infantry and one Nazib Battalion{ Muslims employed by Sikh}, the Nazib battalion was at the summit when it was attacked, it ran short of ammunition and while retreating it was attacked by Khyberis ‘swooped down like lightning upon them and either killed or dispersed the whole battalion which consisted of eight hundred men..two hundred and sixty have been buried and about two hundred made their way to Peshawar; of the remainder nothing is unknown’. Captain Lowe visited the site which was half a mile away from his camp ; stench from the partially buried bodies was so great that it was barely possible to remain there. The back ground of this massacre reflects upon the history and causes of violence in the pass. Colonel Wade the British official at Lahore had promised the Khyberis while he was passing through in 1839 for the payment of allowances and tributes, when he was travelling back from Kabul to Peshawar he was reminded again by the Khyberis of his past commitment, colonel wade again made a promise but it was never fulfilled and resultantly the massacre took place. ‘The chiefs honourably fulfilled their promise, several small parties of officers passed through the Khyber and not one was molested or interfered with, to use the term of the chiefs, women and children might carry gold through the pass’.<sup>19</sup>

Words and commitment have certain honour in the pass, the Afridi on their part always stood by the words given as is obvious from their conduct since this massacre as long as the other party sticks to their words.

I banked upon these words and history for my own safety. We momentarily halted at Ali Masjid to have a better look at the gorge. My mind was thinking about what happened here in 1839. We then raced through the pass, quite often we lost track , there are two tracks which run parallel now, one meant for heavy traffic and other for light vehicles, there is no way you can make out which track leads to where but we just followed the light vehicles and all of a sudden found ourselves at the Landi Kotal. The discussion was mainly around the statements of both maulanas and scouts were furious about them. There is no doubt that such statements are harmful for military morale and in coming days it will have repercussions.

Reaching Khyber Mess was like coming back to a relative’s home, the mess havildar was the same, waiters were same and it was so refreshing to see them and embrace them, i was allotted the same room the Michni, top floor at the end. Mess was undergoing renovations when i left especially the top floor , stairs and billiard room , now they all have been completed and it was giving a good look. Officers were sitting in the ante room watching the fifth and final one day match between Pakistan and South Africa , Pakistan already had lost the series and they lost this match as well without putting up any fight. I was invited by commandant for a dinner at his house at 2000 hours. I was there in time. I forgot to highlight that I was wearing the tie and black blazer since morning when i met IGFC and travelled on Khyber pass in same dress, I might have changed into shalwar kameez at Peshawar but i was running short on time. This dress was my main anxiety while travelling at night on Khyber pass. Commandant as usual was warm in welcome, we talked about trivial things, I conveyed him the regards of Madam Carey Schoffield which he reciprocated. Food was ok, commandant narrated how he had lost his puppy last week, about his hunting trip to Mohmand where he bag almost a dozen birds in an hour {near Salala Post}. I updated him about Chitral and Chitral Scouts. Night was cold, starlit with moon in second phase thus bit of light, all in all very peaceful; it was almost midnight. My room was also cold as there is no gas in Landi Kotal and i did not asked for a electrical heater. Khyber rifles is not authorised K-2 oil in

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<sup>19</sup> The Journal of the United Service Institute of India. October 1938, Volume LXVIII, No.293, *A Visit to Peshawar 100 years ago, Diary of Captain Lowe* . pp, 476-482.

winter which all army units are rather they are allowed only firewood for warmth in winter {December – end march}. Budget is allocated for a year in which amount sanctioned caters for ice in summer and firewood in winter, scale is nine kilogram per day per point and cost of wood is rupees 22/ per kilogram. Quite an expensive affair.

In the morning i wore the same attire{sign of confidence} and met adjutant Major Naeem Saleem, Lieutenant Colonel Ijaz, Major Habib the DQ, subedar major Azim Afridi and host of other scouts. I made a point to go to Mahsud dance party barrack to say hello. It was at this point that i thought about Hakimullah Mahsud. As a fellow tribesman these Mahsud definitely feel sad over his death. There is no doubt that he was a worthy opponent to the state and has added glory to his tribes folklore. Mahsud's were welcoming in nature and soon almost everyone came to meet. I had a cup of tea with them, talk about Chitral, inquired about their welfare and family. Majority of them look different in uniform with so long hair, their pronunciation of words in Urdu is also different but overall a good feeling to be among them. Naik Maroof Mahsud then walked with me towards the barracks of Chitral dance party which i intend visiting. But before that I went to the training area which is next to the barracks. Recruits were being fall in the ground with one instructor carrying out drill lesson, two were sitting on a chair at the far end and one instructor was taking the Urdu classes of recruits. Drill lesson was good, recruits were made to run around and carried out front rolls. Instructors are impressive, very courteous and carrying a military bearing all the time. Then we went to the Chitral dance party living. Chitralis are not as hospitable as the Pathan tribes are but they did not let me go without having a cold drink and the dry fruit. I narrated them about my travel in Chitral, the food i took there, the areas i visited, forts and names of scouts and it was very cordial and one could feel the bond being strengthened among us. Mahsud {Maroof} sat quietly and uttered nothing in these ten odd minutes of our stay. Later i bid good bye to Maroof and came back to adjutant office.

Gul Hassan Kuki Khel the photographer was the man i was looking but he was in Peshawar and reached back around mid day. I met Lieutenant Colonel Ijaz in his office and at that precise moment a loud bang was heard, it transpired that an IED has been exploded close to Landi Kotal without any fatal loss so the wing commander and the QRF rushed to the spot and i walked back to adjutant office. Major Naeem got busy in ironing out the details of this operation, bomb disposal team was also sent there which diffused another IED. Major Naeem highlighted that he had the intelligence report of such an attack, therefore he had increased the patrolling in the area but still the miscreants have dodged him out.

'Teen seeri' simple means three kilograms and here in Khyber rifles it is used to point out the 3 kilogram mutton karhai. When i was leaving last time at that time the account officer was fined one 'teen seeri' and today it was the turn of the medical officer. The karhai is bought from the 'Adda din' the most famous of Landi Kotal karhai makers, it cost rupees one thousand per kilogram. It is definitely delicious, tender and enjoyable, tomatoes were lacking as the price of them have gone to rupees 150/ per kilogram. I learnt that on week end no less than 50 such karahis are ordered by troops in Landi Kotal apart from the numerous karhis which they cook themselves. A very lively gathering, full of jokes, laughs and so on. I must admit that I did not feel like having a meat dish at any other part of Frontier after my last visit of Khyber rifles; they are too good in making meat especially the lamb dishes. Lieutenant Colonel Ijaz is from 14 Punjab Regiment and as such he has like an infantry officer, smiling, and taking the youngsters along. I enjoyed this lunch which was consumed at 1500 hours. Major Habib is the DQ, he is from 18 Horse and very meticulous, serious and efficient officer, right man for the correct appointment. Before lunch i sat for an hour in his office and observed his working. Issue was the register which are used by the guards and by the staff for 'Sab acha'. It was hilarious and he speaks volume for Major Habib, he phoned PC at Peshawar to find the most economical registers, he calculated

the pages and dived them into days and then worked out the register required; amazing. I also made a call to Lieutenant colonel Mushtaq at Charbagh and requested him for some stuff which he promised to deliver. The wings are in process of changing their locations , Charbagh wing is moving to Jarobi and Landi Kotal wing is going to Ali Masjid ; thus there will be no wing at Charbagh.

In the mess the key addition is the 'stone' which has been placed outside in the lawn , it has natural lines which reads as Allah and Muhammad in vague manner but still it is a good addition as it balance out the overwhelming British era monuments. Had food in my room which comprised of chicken karhai {average} omelettes{good} and a cup of tea.

Commandant came to room and sat for an hour , there is an operation going on in connection with the morning IED blast and adjutant and few other troops have gone out to search the vehicle thus commandant was interrupted time and again by this . My course mate Lieutenant Colonel Rahit Qadeer Butt looks very innocent , he has a baby face, grey hair, married but childless, he lives in Morgah Colony, he was opposite to Major Dogar's house. I met him twice in last three years, one at course gathering and other when i went to meet Dogar. I also met Qadeer's wife in that short hello hello. Last month it was reported on face book that his wife has been murdered , it a a shock and i also like other felt sad. Now today it was reported in the newspapers that infact Qadeer himself was the brain behind the killing of his wife, he had an illicit affair with a former army nurse who happens to be Christian as well. Qadeer and nurse planned the murder, Qadeer went out of city for an alibi and nurse came in a red car and smashed the head of the lady and then drove away. Qadeer in his police report pointed the finger at his brother in law. The whole drama was unearthed by the local police which worked in a smart manner without coming under any army pressure, the CCTV footage and record of mobile calls both helped in reaching the culprits. Commandant Colonel Mansoor was also in picture about this but not the today's development thus when I narrated him the events he was perturbed. He knew Qadeer and had a common friend who later asked him{commandant} to interfere on behalf of Qadeer; now commandant called the same friend and narrated him the full story; commandant was genuinely happy to come out so clean of this mess.

## 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

Day was normal, I was supposed to go to Ali Masjid for a night stay thus I was eager to finish off the reaming work concerning the book. Went around the fort with Gul Hussain Kuki Khel and found some interesting things. In the map section, I found sketches made by recruits and then the education staff handed me the essays written by the school boys regarding their villages. Weather is cold in the morning but warm water runs in the bathroom thus bit of mental peace. I still don't take breakfast in morning just a cup of tea and tea here is average in temperature and taste.

Weather fine, one loves sun now as it stays only till 1700 hours rather the office and mess compound start loosing sun rays quite early; just like army aviation mess and squadron area in Skardu. A junior commissioned officer was promoted today and when I was sitting in the subedar major's office he walked in with garlands around his neck with followers , he looked as if he has been married an hour ago, such a puzzled look on his face trying to grasp the intensity of the moment.

After observing Frontier Corps life and working pattern , I really appreciates the promotion of soldiers to subedar rank. It demands an unflinching non tiring and a positive body attitude towards his job. He will be put on microscopic examination in every promotion but especially for junior commission, why I am saying it with so much confidence is in the fact that a promotion conference was

already underway and when I was sitting with Major Habib in his office he was dealing with such matters. A havildar had an average report thus he was given the signal to come and explain in person as the reasons but more importantly to be judged by the commandant in interview about his potentials.

Incidentally , i was sitting in the adjutant's office when the military transport JCO walked in and after a pause he introduced himself as the same whom i had put on the promotion ranks at Charbagh two months ago; he also highlighted that he is real brother of the Corps SM Subedar Azim Afridi. All in all they are eight brothers{they seldom talks about number of sisters} and four have or are serving in Frontier Corps.

I spent time in kuki khel's office going through all the pictures.

## Ali Masjid Forts

Khyber Rifles Ali Masjid Fort was constructed in 1927, it is on the saddle overlooking Ali Masjid mosque and the small valley on the east .There are two piquets at Ali Masjid the eastern piquet overlook the east and the western piquet has a much smaller view as the pass itself is at its narrowest band, however the important water source and the area on west remains under observation. Both piquets are of identical pattern and size which is rectangular in pattern , three storied solid piece of stone, mud, iron and wood complex. In 1942 the wall was erected on the southern edge of the saddle thus making the complex as a fort, on the northern edge is the road and stream almost 1500 feet below. Area is rough, mountainous, with green shrubs which are of no use other than giving a green colour , shade and camouflage, no fruit trees. Stones, rocks are of solid in nature, the most obvious is the 'Chaqmaq' which when strikes together produces spark. Originally there was no motor able track leading to the fort from Ali Masjid ; it was an equitation oriented piquet complex. It was important in every sense because it was overhead the place where most gruesome massacre of Sikh battalions took place twice between 1837-1839 , in the past similar history is orally traded. Importance is in the strategic location of the Ali Masjid ; other tracks which originates from Landi Kotal and follows Chora valley and the track coming from Tirah alley joins here. Thus for the caravans moving towards the west in medieval ages this place was important ; abundance of water at Ali Masjid is another key factor, it still providing water to Shagai and Jamrud forts since 1878. The very first Sikh venture under illustrious Hari Singh Nalwa in April 1837 was mainly a push by the Nalwa to secure water for the Jamrud Fort. Kuki Khel a clan of Afridi lives and control the pass along with water source, although Zakkha Khel also have a bazaar here.

Ali Masjid name and mystique comprises of few segments, the village itself is on the east of the Khyber rifles Fort in the open bowl, the Khyber-Torkham, railway line have its railway station here too. The mosque which has given the whole valley its present name is at the foothill of the Fort, the history of Ali Masjid is oral in nature which rely upon the presence of Hazarat Ali in the area, most likely the place became popular during Mahmud of Ghazna reign. During the Hindushahi rule of the area {900AD} and even before this date the lone historical evidence is the Buddhist stupa which is on the west of Ali Masjid mosque. A close



observation of the adjoining hills highlights the unmistakable remnants of old fortifications , one particular such hillock is located north west of western piquet.

The Ali Masjid fort went a major expansion in 1942 when the underground bunkers were constructed , they are presently used as hospital but they were never meant for this purpose originally. The hospital is a marvel of originality , hard work and engineering. It is practically bomb proof and is the one of its kind on Frontier. It is almost fifty feet deep and inside the mountain, almost twenty odd feet in width and 150 feet in length. There are no outlets for fresh air neither for any kind of light, rooms are small and without any door, more of operation room of an army than that of medical profession.

Another myth of Ali Masjid fort is the southern watch tower which is almost an hour walk from the main complex because of broken ground, it was constructed in the same time period as the underground bunker. The myth started in 1983 when the sentries posted at the watch tower started creating rumors about the 'Jin' and soon it became so established a fact that sentries one night simply ran away from the watchtower complaining of being hit with stones by the Jins. The watch tower was abandoned and even few rounds of mortar were fired on it by the wing itself to dispel the thoughts of it being occupied by extra terrestrial creatures. Presently the fort was not under regular occupation since 2007 because of deployment at other sectors and now No.3 Wing is in process of establishing its headquarters thus the old myths have surfaced again for which both commandant and wing commander have decided to visit the watchtower themselves but it is an interesting myth.

Water shortage had been a major source of all disasters in past, within the fort there is a central water storage having a capacity of over 80,000 gallons and half a dozen more water tanks with lesser quantity hold. Weather is fine in summer but cold in winter which is further aggravated by the strong winds which blows all the time as the fort stands at the junction of various valleys . Electricity load shedding is another factor which makes living in isolation even more obvious, however the solar panels are a new invention and troops are making the best use of it by having small panels for mobile charging.

## Shagai Fort.

Shagai Fort was constructed in 1927 at the eastern edge of the village Ali Masjid on a higher plateau overlooking the railway station and the whole valley, it was constructed as an army fort and till to date it has always been under occupation of army regiments. It is a diamond shape and structure complex, constructed with brick and iron, having over fifty feet high walls with five watch towers which can operate independently also, water storage is outside the walls of fort but within fire shot of sentries. The western lands adjacent to fort is utilised as the firing range and sports ground. There is a swimming pool and squash court apart from tennis court inside the fort. Fort have two storied construction, all in all 104 rooms are available for living accommodation with each room sufficient enough for platoon strength of force. The fort construction primarily follows the Drosh fort construction design in which firing bays are incorporated within

the living quarters .The other unique feature of construction is the circular roof, a sentry can walk all around the fort roof. Shagai Fort and Ali Masjid Forts are in line of sight to each other with two more piquets along the axis, Shagai also have two more watchtowers , one in the north and other in the east. Presently it is the rear headquarters of Schwebo Battalion .

Shagai importance lies in the fact that it controls the Tirah valley route also and act as reserve to any event which spills out of Khyber Rifles control.

## Jamrud Fort.

Jamrud Fort is the oldest fort in the Khyber Rifles area of operations, Khyber Pass starts or terminates at Jamrud depending upon whether one is moving eastward or westward. There are two forts at Jamrud , one the old and original fort is presently located on the north side of the road Peshawar-Kabul and the smaller fort is on the southern side of the road. The original fort is under the army use and the Khyber Rifles wing occupies the rather new fortified complex which in reality cannot be termed as a fort.

Hari Singh Nalwa completed the construction of forts that included Jamrud, Peshawar and Shab Qadar. Jamrud was under command of Maha Singh with a strength of 600 Sikh and Muslims troops, where as Shab Qadar was placed under command of Lehna Singh Sandhawala with 1900 troops.<sup>20</sup> Layout and construction of Jamrud Fort is almost a replica of Bala Hisar of Peshawar only it is small in circumference. Constructed with mud bricks which still are in use with supplement of stone bricks. Undoubtedly the fort stands today in almost the same fashion as it was in 1837, the grand wooden gate is still in use so is the water well which is 400 feet deep. Jamrud thus stands as the last frontier fort of the Sikhs protecting Peshawar and also the Lahore Darbar from the invasion route of millenniums; Khyber Pass.

Jamrud Fort was popularly known as ‘Hari Nalwa Fort’ after the Sikh general who not only completed it but also took his last breaths here on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1837. The very room in which Nalwa spent last days of his life is the top of the fort and after his death the news was hidden from the soldiers due to morale factor and for three days the dead body of Nalwa used to be propped on the window to keep the troops morale high and intact. In 1892 a Samadhi was constructed in the memory of Nalwa.

Jamrud Fort or Nalwa Fort provides excellent all round observation as far as eye can see, it was important because it kept a check on the Afghans attempt to recapture Peshawar, presently it is still vital for the maintenance of peace and order in the area. Fort now encompasses almost whole area and land in the north uptill the Jamrud railway station, a wall has been erected around the complex which was completed in 2009. Firing range, sports ground and troops married accommodation which in the past were outside the main fort are now within the walled complex. One infantry battalion remains in occupation of the fort and it helps also in its maintenance and uplift. Fort has five cordons each separated by a gate and area

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<sup>20</sup> Khushwant Singh, *Ranjit Singh Maharaja of the Punjab* {Penguin, 1962, Delhi}, p189.

becomes narrow and narrow as it moves inward and upward ; ultimately at the top which is almost 300 feet higher than the ground level there are only a compound of five rooms at the top which in the past was the residence of the fort commander.

## Khyber Rifles Jamrud Fort.

The other fort , smaller in size was constructed in 1944 opposite the main Nalwa Fort, it is flat in nature with open compound having double storied accommodation three sides with office on the remaining end. With the passage of time it kept on expanding and now houses the political administration offices in the adjacent land, it used to be the wing headquarters as well but now one company is stationed. As recently as on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013, the Khyber Rifles successfully conducted an operation against the group of kidnappers hiding in the Jamrud area from this fort; it was a successful. operation.